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EFSA makes statement on aspartame

Friday 05 May 2006

The European Food Safety Authority today announced the results of its evaluation of a new study on the sweetener aspartame.

The European Commission asked EFSA to review research from the Ramazzini Institute in Bologna, which claimed to have shown that rats given dosages of aspartame equivalent to the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) may develop tumours.

Today, EFSA announced the report of its Scientific Panel of Food Additives, Flavourings, Processing Aids and Materials in Contact with Food (AFC). EFSA concluded that 'on the basis of all the evidence currently available, that there is no need to further review the safety of aspartame nor to revise the previously established ADI'.

EFSA's announcement on the AFC's evaluation of the Ramazzini Institute's study on aspartame raises similar concerns about the Ramazzini study to those expressed by the UK's independent expert group, the Committee On Carcinogenicity (COC), earlier this year.

The COC identified a number of issues that indicated the results of the study may not be reliable. These related to concerns about the health status of the animals, some details of methodology which do not conform to currently accepted best practice and adequacy of external peer review.

However, the report provided to COC at the time by the Ramazzini Institute did not allow the committee members to draw firm conclusions on whether these issues compromised the results and interpretation of the study. The COC therefore asked for further clarification from the Ramazzini Institute, which has now been received. The additional information has been assessed by the EFSA panel and is included in their opinion published today.

Committee on Carcinogenicity (COC)

More information on the committee

EFSA presents results of its evaluation of a new study

See the full statement