

## Ajinomoto welcomes SCF Review

Ajinomoto Switzerland AG, Europe's leading manufacturer of aspartame, welcomes the request by the United Kingdom's Food Standards Agency (FSA) that the European Commission's Scientific Committee on Food (SCF) review the numerous references to aspartame which are picked up by "Medline" and "Toxline" searches on the internet.

These searches, which are freely available to anyone with an internet connection, include peer-reviewed studies which appear in serious scientific journals on the one hand, and speculative remarks in letters, in newspaper articles and at conferences on the other hand. A review of this material by the SCF will provide additional assurance to regulatory agencies throughout Europe that there is a substantial body of reliable scientific evidence which supports the safety of aspartame.

All recent reviews of the scientific database have confirmed that aspartame is safe:

- The United Kingdom's own Committee on Toxicology (COT) reviewed the data on all sweeteners in 1992 and concluded that aspartame was safe.
- In 1996, the United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) approved aspartame as a "general purpose sweetener," extending the use of aspartame to all categories of food and drinks. This approval marked the 26th time that the FDA had affirmed the safety of aspartame over a period of 23 years.
- Following allegations about aspartame and cancer which had generated much of the material found on the internet, the United Kingdom's Committee on Carcinogenicity, the FDA, the SCF, the Swedish Food Authority, and the Conseil Supérieur d'Hygiène Publique de France considered aspartame. All of these organisations concluded that aspartame was safe.

The request to the SCF to review the "Medline" and "Toxline" material does not imply that the FSA has questions about the safety of aspartame. In an open letter published in March 2001, Dr Andrew Wadge, Head of the Chemical Safety and Toxicology Division at the FSA, stated:

"The Agency has not itself expressed concern about the safety of aspartame. Indeed, we recently issued a statement setting out our view which makes clear that aspartame was approved for use only after its safety was rigorously assessed."

**27 April, 2001**