

Neither Consumers nor the Food Standards Agency have Concerns about the Safety of Aspartame

Ajinomoto, the world's leading supplier of aspartame to food and drink companies, welcomed today the reconfirmation by the United Kingdom's Food Standards Agency (FSA) that it has no concerns about the safety of aspartame. Aspartame, like all low-calorie sweeteners, is approved for use in the European Union under the terms of the European Sweetener Directive. In May 2006, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) stated:

"There is no need to further review the safety of aspartame."

It is, therefore, surprising that the Food Standards Agency has announced that it is starting work on a further study on aspartame. The agency has emphasised that it has no concerns about aspartame safety, and has stated that its new study is to address "consumer concerns". Large scale quantified consumer research, however, has shown that there is no significant level of consumer concern about low calorie sweeteners in general or aspartame in particular.

When asked "Which ingredients are bad for you?", 53% mentioned fat, 39% mentioned sugar, and 29% mentioned salt. 3% said "sweeteners", and only 0.3% said aspartame.

Aspartame tastes like sugar and enables food and drink companies to provide many popular low calorie products. Sales of products sweetened with aspartame have grown steadily since the ingredient was introduced in 1983.

Aspartame is a simple food ingredient which is made from two amino acids, the building blocks of protein that occur widely in the food we eat every day. They are found in eggs, meat, cheese, fish, cereals, fruit and milk. When we consume aspartame, it is broken down in the digestive system to very small quantities of common dietary components.

The FSA has explained its actions by referring to rumours circulated on the internet for more than a decade by scaremongers and conspiracy-theorists, mostly from the United States. In August 2007, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority, faced with the same absurd allegations, stated:

"The claims being made - and widely reported in the media - are doing a great public disservice. The fact is, a large amount of very good science shows that aspartame is a very safe substance. Studies that purport to show otherwise have thus far been overwhelmingly rejected by leading food safety authorities as flawed."

22 June 2009