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5<sup>th</sup> August 2021

**For food industry and trade associations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland**

## **Action required related to Ethylene Oxide residues detected in Locust Bean Gum (LBG), E410**

Dear Colleagues,

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been made aware that the pesticide, ethylene oxide (ETO), has been detected in locust bean gum (LBG), also known as the food additive E410. This has resulted in ETO also being found in some food and feed products containing LBG (E410) in Europe. ETO is not approved for use in food in the UK or the EU. The detection of ETO in LBG follows previous issues with its unauthorised use in other products such as sesame seeds and dried herbs and spices.

We have received several Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) alerts concerning affected products supplied to the UK from the EU. The FSA has been notifying local authorities where a RASFF concerns a business in their area.

There have been a much larger number of recalls and withdrawals across the EU. The UK will continue to monitor the situation and scale of implicated products on the UK market.

LBG (E410) is used as a thickening agent, gelling or stabilising agent. The food additive locust bean gum (E 410) is authorised for use under the additives retained EU regulation 1333/2008 in a range of food categories including ice-cream, breakfast cereals, meat products, confectionery, fine bakery wares, and various dairy products.

Varying levels of ETO have been found in the LBG used in various products known to have been distributed to the UK ranging from 0.25 mg/kg to 29 mg/kg. LBG as a food additive is used in variable amounts in several foods resulting in a reduction in the level of ETO in the finished food. Based on risk assessments that have been carried out it is unlikely that there would be a concern for health, although due to the nature of genotoxic carcinogens it is not possible to say there is zero risk to health.

Since any contaminated LBG is not in compliance with legislation, the FSA is advising businesses that products manufactured using LBG known to be contaminated with

ethylene oxide should not be placed on the market, and any stock placed on the market should be withdrawn. The FSA is not aware of any usage of ETO contaminated LBG in infant formula or follow on infant formula but if such instances come to light these may be considered on a case by case basis, an incident report form should be submitted using the following link [Report a food problem | Food Standards Agency](#).

In addition, stock of locust bean gum contaminated with ethylene oxide should not be placed on the market, and any stock on the market should be withdrawn.

The FSA is not advocating a full consumer recall of affected products as the risk to individual consumers is low. Other countries may be adopting other approaches, but FSA advice is based on our own assessment of the risk.

If you are affected by this issue, please inform your LA. Non-compliant stock and products should not be placed on the market and appropriate actions should be taken to ensure that ingredients sourced are compliant with legislation.

We ask that you respond promptly to any notifications or instructions from suppliers or LAs to withdraw products from the market and, when asked, to provide other information in relation to the incident. LAs have been asked to inform the FSA where there have been withdrawals.

ETO is regulated under pesticide legislation which is led and enforced by Health and Safety Executive (HSE). In addition, ethylene oxide may not be used for sterilising purposes in food additives as per the note in Annex of the retained EU regulation 231/2012 on the specifications for food additives listed in Annexes II and III to retained EU Regulation 1333/2008. ETO used for such purposes in LBG and use of said LBG in composite products would not be compliant with food additives legislation

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Please contact food incidents team at [foodincidents@food.gov.uk](mailto:foodincidents@food.gov.uk) if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'RUBHI', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

*Rajwinder Ubhi*

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