

- CEFS Factsheets -

The Sugar Industry: Safety, Quality and Good Practice

1. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE FOOD QUALITY DEBATE

Public awareness of food safety and quality has grown considerably. In an effort to restore public confidence in food, the European institutions responded to consumer concerns through the publication of the White Paper on Food Safety in January 2000. The White Paper put forward plans for an ambitious reform of the EU food safety system. The cornerstone of this reform is the establishment of the European Food Safety Authority together with the definition of general principles and requirements which will apply to all future food and animal feed legislation. The Commission also proposed a wide range of measures to improve existing legislation, to promote better enforcement of these rules and to make them more transparent to consumers. This upgrading covers all aspects of food production, from the farm to the table.

CEFS fully supports this approach because, as an industry, we are linked to all parts of the food chain from seed growers to final consumers.

2. CEFS, SUGAR & FOOD QUALITY

SUGAR AS SUCH

The role of nature - Sugar or sucrose is widespread in nature. It is produced as a result of photosynthesis in plants. The best sucrose-producing plants are sugar beet and sugar cane. Sugar is extracted from these plants only through physical processes.

Sugar in foods - Although sugar is best known for its sweet taste it also has a range of other functional properties. Although not as well known, these properties are very important to a number of foods. Consequently, sugar positively contributes to the texture, consistency and preservation of foods, acting as a medium for colours and flavours. These are functions which other sweeteners cannot replicate.

So even though numerous sugar substitutes have been introduced to the market, some of which are cheaper, sugar consumption has been stable for decades.

Changing lifestyles have led to changes in the food supply with more and more food being prepared in the factory rather than in the kitchen. This has led to less sugar being consumed directly and more via the foods offered by the food industry.

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AND THE PRODUCTION CHAIN

A responsible industry...Sugar is produced within the European Union to high quality standards and comprehensive quality management control systems. The close co-operation among the different players, from farmers to sugar manufacturers, refiners and distributors, makes it possible to apply quality-assurance measures very effectively throughout the food chain. The Sugar Industry is conscious of its primary responsibility in producing safe products and takes numerous measures to ensure the production of safe sugar and other products generated from the sugar production process.

- Purchase of raw material, meeting high standards as part of an integrated chain management approach in which the sugar industry is a leader.
- The Sugar Industry operates with quality management systems to at least ISO 9000 family standards. Included in these systems is HACCP (Hazard Analysis of Critical

Control Points) as well as quality controls throughout the whole manufacturing process. Standard framework code of good manufacturing practice, drafted by the European Association of Sugar Manufacturers, provides guidance to all sugar factories for their sugar production.

CEFS is producing guidelines for its members to ensure the maintenance of high quality standards in the production of its other products intended for animal feed.

The technical competence of the sugar industry results in continuous investment in product research and process technology. The sugar industry is proactive when it comes to quality control, safety and the adherence to standards.

...committed to the EU's sustainable development goals - The members of CEFS are firmly committed to the EU environmental and sustainable development policy and believe that the sugar industry makes an important contribution to the EU's initiatives in this area. In recent years, the EU sugar industry has introduced a wide range of measures to enhance further its environmental performance. In conjunction with its social partners, CEFS forms part of a European social model through a whole series of guarantees relating to working conditions, quality of life and vocational training, going well beyond legal requirements.

Nutritional characteristics of sugar - The overall scientific assessment of the role of sugar in nutrition clearly shows that sugar, as a sweet-tasting carbohydrate, makes an important contribution to a healthy diet. It particularly encourages dietary variety: "moderate intake of sugar rich foods can also provide for a palatable and nutritious diet FAO/WHO. Thus sugar is part of a balanced and varied diet.

The Sugar Industry has always adhered to food safety standards and constantly strives to improve the quality and the safety of its products. Today, the Sugar Industry continues to improve its processes and quality management systems in order to satisfy consumers' increasingly high expectations and demands. Consumers expect food quality in terms of organoleptic and nutritional criteria but also expect their foods to be safe - with strict adherence to codes of good practice.

3. SOME USEFUL LINKS

For more information regarding the role of sugar in a healthy diet:

CEFS home page:

<http://www.cefs.org>

CEFS bulletins Apropos – Sugar:

<http://www.cefs.org/en/apropos/welcome.htm>

Further information on the European Commission's initiatives in respect of food quality is available below:

DG Agriculture

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_fr.htm

DG Health and Consumer Protection

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm

Other important players in the debate...

European Parliament Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/agri_home_en.htm

European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/comparl/envi/default_en.htm

The European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC)

<http://www.beuc.org>

The World Sugar Research Organisation (WSRO)

<http://www.wsro.org/>

