



Stevia Extracts Win FDA approval

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The Food and Drug Administration declares stevia, a natural, zero-calorie stevia plant, as safe for use in foods in beverages.

The FDA on Dec. 17 declared a natural, zero-calorie sweetener derived from stevia for use in foods in beverages, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The agency's non-objection to petitions clears the way for Coca-Cola Co. and other companies to use high-purity stevia extracts in a variety of products.

The FDA issued letters to Cargill Inc. and Whole Earth Sweetener Co., announcing that it has no objections to their separate claims that rebaudioside A, a compound found in stevia, poses no health threat when used in foods and beverages. Both companies had filed with the agency in May claiming the sweetener should be generally recognized as safe.

The Journal also reported Coca-Cola will introduce a version of Sprite with stevia in New York this month at special locations and events, with a broader roll-out next year. The company is also introducing two flavors of a juice drink in its new line, using the sweetener, and plans to put it in a new reduced-calorie version of Glaceau's Smartwater early next year.

PepsiCo, which is using a different version of the sweetener, plans to put it on the market: a zero-calorie SoBe Lifewater and an orange juice drink called Tropicana Simply Orange.

calories of orange juice, the Journal reported. PepsiCo already launched the sweetener in Peru, where stevia is approved for use in foods and drinks, and is selling well there.

Both Cargill and Merisant already sell tabletop versions of the sweetener.