



New study proves no adverse effects of carrageenan in human cells

WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 10, 2016) – A new study on carrageenan, an ingredient key to delivering stability, texture and nutrients in many foods and beverages, clearly demonstrates that the ingredient does not induce inflammation in human cells as claimed by carrageenan critics. The study, which was conducted by internationally recognized toxicologist and carrageenan expert Dr. James M. McKim, Jr., was recently accepted for publication by the peer-reviewed journal *Food and Toxicology*. This pivotal study represents the culmination of two years of research that was unable to replicate any of the findings of carrageenan critics, including Dr. Joanne Tobacman, who claim the food ingredient contributes to certain adverse health outcomes.

Publication of McKim’s study raises major questions about the validity of Tobacman’s conclusions and underscores the importance of replicating scientific results in different laboratories and by multiple researchers. McKim’s research was carefully designed to investigate several recent studies Tobacman has cited as evidence of her claims that carrageenan causes inflammation and is harmful. Not only was McKim unable to replicate the negative effects Tobacman has reported, his research showed carrageenan has no measurable effects on cells and provides strong evidence that carrageenan consumed in foods and beverages would not cause inflammation in humans.

“Dr. McKim’s research confirms what we have known for decades—carrageenan has no impact on the human body when consumed in food,” said Robert Rankin, Executive Director of the International Food Additives Council (IFAC), which commissioned the study. “Carrageenan producers have taken very seriously claims that the ingredient is unsafe, thoroughly investigated the research supporting those claims and found them to be baseless.”

Carrageenan is a common food ingredient used in many foods, such as ice cream, chocolate milk, yogurt and soy milk, for its stabilizing and thickening properties. It is also an approved additive for use in infant formula, where it ensures that essential nutrients remain mixed throughout liquid products. It occurs naturally in red seaweed that is grown and harvested sustainably by tens of thousands of family farmers around the globe. Carrageenan is popular as a plant-based, eco-friendly alternative to animal-derived thickeners and has been used safely in foods for hundreds of years.

McKim’s study comes just months before the U.S. National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is expected to vote on whether to reapprove the use of carrageenan in organic foods sold in the United States. Groups touting Tobacman’s research have lobbied the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ban carrageenan in all foods and the NOSB to remove it from organic products. Despite these efforts, regulatory bodies around the world have repeatedly reviewed and dismissed their claims, finding carrageenan to be safe for use in all foods.

McKim’s research exposes fundamental flaws in Tobacman’s evidence, adds to the vast body of scientific research demonstrating carrageenan safety and thoroughly debunks certain groups’ claims that



carrageenan is harmful and should be removed from foods. For more information about carrageenan and other ingredients and additives used in food production, please visit www.foodingredientfacts.org.

About IFAC

The International Food Additives Council (IFAC) is a global association representing manufacturers of food ingredients. Founded in 1980, IFAC strives to promote science-based regulation and the global harmonization of food ingredient standards and specifications.

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