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Dear Sir/Madam

Attached are the comments that the New Zealand Food & Grocery Council wishes to present on the *Call for Submissions – Application A1212: Beta-fructofuranosidase enzyme from Aspergillus fijiensis*.

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**Call for Submissions – Application A1212:
Beta-fructofuranosidase enzyme from
*Aspergillus fijiensis***

**Submission by the New Zealand Food & Grocery
Council**

14 December 2021

NEW ZEALAND FOOD & GROCERY COUNCIL

1. The New Zealand Food & Grocery Council (**NZFGC**) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Call for Submissions – Application A1212: Beta-fructofuranosidase enzyme from *Aspergillus fijiensis*.
2. NZFGC represents the major manufacturers and suppliers of food, beverage and grocery products in New Zealand. This sector generates over \$40 billion in the New Zealand domestic retail food, beverage and grocery products market, and over \$34 billion in export revenue from exports to 195 countries – representing 65% of total good and services exports. Food and beverage manufacturing is the largest manufacturing sector in New Zealand, representing 45% of total manufacturing income. Our members directly or indirectly employ more than 493,000 people – one in five of the workforce.

THE PROPOSAL

3. Meiji Food Materia Co Ltd is a manufacturer and marketer of speciality food ingredients including food additives and processing aids. It has applied to FSANZ for an amendment to the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (**Food Standards Code**) to permit *Aspergillus fijiensis* (**A. fijiensis**) as a microbial source for the production of the enzyme beta-fructofuranosidase as a processing aid in any food.
4. NZFGC understands that in this application, a microbial source of beta-fructofuranosidase currently approved in the Food Standards Code was originally identified as the species *Aspergillus niger* (**A. niger**), but more advanced analytical methods have now identified it as the species *A. fijiensis*. The request for the additional permission is to ensure regulatory certainty for the applicant.

COMMENTS

5. NZFGC supports the Application and proposal by FSANZ to amend the Food Standards Code to provide the requisite permission. NZFGC submitted on the original application in 2013 under Application A1055 for the use of fructo-oligosaccharide (FOS) as a nutritive substance. Subsequently, the gazettal permitted the use of the enzyme for any technological purpose for all foods, not just for the production of FOS.
6. Short chain fructo-oligosaccharides (short chain FOS), which are identical to the currently approved 'inulin derived substances', are added to foods to produce softer stools. In infant formula, the softer stools produced by formula fed infants where the formula contains short chain FOS, are closer to the soft stools produced by breast fed infants.
7. At that time, sucrose was an alternative source for short chain FOS. Also at that time, FSANZ summarised its previous work (and studies confirmed the benefits) and did not identify any negative impacts. On this basis, FSANZ concluded that short chain FOS sourced from sucrose (FOS_{sucrose}) was:
"technologically justified and is as safe as IDS [inulin derived substances] already permitted to be added to foods generally and infant formula products, infant foods and FSFYC [Formulated Supplementary Foods for Young Children] alone or in combination with IDS and/or GOS [galacto-oligosaccharides] up to the currently permitted maximum concentrations."¹
8. The role of the invertase enzyme in the production of short chain FOS_{sucrose} was fully described in the FSANZ risk assessment. FSANZ agreed that invertase produced from

¹ p46 Supporting Document 1: Risk and technical assessment report – Application A 1055: Short Chain Fructo-oligosaccharides, FSANZ [2012]

A. niger met international specifications for enzyme preparation, and had a history of use in a number of countries.

9. FSANZ's safety assessment in this case reached the same conclusion, no public health and safety concerns were identified in the assessment of beta-fructofuranosidase derived from *A. fijiensis* as an enzyme for food processing. The strain *A. fijiensis* is neither toxigenic nor pathogenic.

International comparisons

10. We note that this enzyme has been approved for use in Canada and France and is currently awaiting consideration more broadly for the EU through EFSA.

NZFGC Position

11. NZFGC supports the use of beta-fructofuranosidase derived from *A. fijiensis* as an enzyme for food processing and therefore the amendment to the Food Standards Code.
12. When the *FSANZ Act* is amended to create new pathways and approaches to expedite low-risk amendments to food standards we will be pleased to not see these kinds of applications requiring public submission. This facility was discussed in the May 2021 consultation where we supported an amendment that would deliver such an outcome as well as new pathways to adopt international standards relevant to the Food Standards Code.