

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE FOOD REGULATIONS REGARDING MAXIMUM LIMIT FOR INORGANIC ARSENIC IN HUSKED RICE

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) initiated a public consultation exercise for the period 31 July 2017 to 29 September 2017 on the proposed amendments to the Food Regulations regarding maximum limit for inorganic arsenic in husked rice. Feedback was sought from stakeholders (rice importers and food manufacturers) on the following:

- i. Whether the husked rice imported by the company is able to comply with the new proposed maximum limit of 0.35 ppm inorganic arsenic.
- ii. Whether the company would be able to find alternative sources should their imported husked rice be unable to comply with the new proposed maximum limit, and the estimated timeframe required to do so.

A total of 13 comments were received at the close of the public consultation exercise. 5 out of the 13 comments were affirmation from the industry that they were able to comply with the proposed maximum limit for inorganic arsenic in husked rice. There was 1 comment received from a rice importer requesting AVA to adopt a more stringent limit for inorganic arsenic in husked rice, following the limit imposed by the European Union. The remaining comments mostly pertain to enquiries on requirement for laboratory testing for inorganic arsenic in husked rice, (with one importer voicing concerns on the additional costs to be incurred should AVA require testing for every batch of imported rice) as well as import requirements for rice.

AVA has responded to all the comments provided by stakeholders. With regard to the concern raised by a rice importer on the additional cost incurred for laboratory testing for inorganic arsenic in husked rice, AVA has clarified that rice importers do not need to submit test reports to AVA to certify that every batch of rice imported by them complies with the new limit. Rice importers should periodically conduct laboratory testing on the imported rice to monitor compliance with the legislative requirements.

With regard to the request to adopt a more stringent limit for inorganic arsenic in husked rice, AVA has explained that the proposed maximum limit of 0.35 ppm for inorganic arsenic in husked rice is consistent with the maximum limit adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (the international food standards setting organisation) in 2016. AVA will continue to monitor international development in this area and review our limits in future, if needed, so as to protect public health.

Based on the feedback received, AVA notes that in general, stakeholders have no objection to the proposed maximum limit for inorganic arsenic in husked rice. As such, AVA plans to incorporate the proposed maximum limit for inorganic arsenic in husked rice in the 2018 amendments to the Food Regulations. After the official gazettal of the amendments, the industry will be given a 12-month grace period to transition to the new limit of 0.35 ppm.

AVA appreciates the time taken by stakeholders to submit comments which have contributed to the decision making process. We would like to encourage all stakeholders to actively participate in future calls for comments.

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