STEVIA TIMELINE

Important Dates and Events

1880

1887

Moises Santiago Bertoni "discovers" stevia while studying herbs used by Guarani natives in Paraguay.

1890

1900

1906

Stevia is scientifically named Stevia *rebaudiana* (Bertoni) after Paraguayan chemist Dr. Rebaudi.

1910

1920

1921

U.S. Trade Commissioner George Brady first presents stevia to the U.S. Department of Agriculture calling it a "new sugar plant with great commercial possibilities."

1930

1931

Two French chemists, M. Bridel and R. Lavielle, isolate the components that give stevia its sweet taste

1940

1941

The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew commission botanist Ronald Melville to study stevia for use in Great Britain as war shortages demanded the search for an acceptable sugar substitute. Melville reports that both leaves and the extracted sweet component of the leaf were suitable for sweetening foods and beverages.

1950

1954

Japan begins domestic cultivation of stevia.

1955

In the United States, the National Institute of Health studies stevia's history and properties. This study establishes the structure and chemistry of major components of the plant.

1960

1958

The Food Additive Amendments to the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act allows food ingredients to be Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) if an ingredient has been in common usage for a long period of time, and/or was demonstrated safe by a sufficient body of scientific literature. Some common GRAS ingredients include vanilla, mustard and cinnamon.

1970

1970

Japan conducts several safety tests and concludes that stevia is safe. Japan begins marketing stevia as an alternative to artificial sweeteners after having banned artificial sweeteners in the 1960s.

1980

1977

Japan begins using stevia sweeteners commercially in food products, soft drinks and for table use.

1980s

China begins producing stevia commercially, becoming the main supplier to Japan.

1990

1990s

Paraguay and Brazil begin to produce and distribute stevia products directly to consumers internationally via health food stores, herbal product outlets and direct mail order sales.

Paraguay begins to receive some assistance from Japan to assess the advantages of promoting stevia cultivation.

1986

Brazil's Ministry of health authorizes the use of stevioside as a natural sweetener in dietetic foods and drinks.

1994

The Dietary Supplement Health and Education (DSHEA) requires the FDA to revise its stance to permit stevia to be used as a dietary supplement, although not as a food additive.

1995

The DSHEA Act goes into effect and the FDA grants market approval of stevia extract to be sold as a dietary supplement in the United States.

2000

2003

Paraguay sends documentation to the CODEX Alimentarius Commission requesting regulatory status as a food additive for stevia.

*The CODEX Alimentarius Commission was created in 1963 by FAO and WHO to develop food standards, guidelines and related texts such a codes of practice under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program.

2010

2000

The EU Commission rejects initial petitions to allow stevia either as a novel food and/or novel food ingredient in the European food market dueinadequate specifications for purity and outstanding safety questions. However, some EU countries continue to grow and use stevia for use in herbal applications and teas. (Germany, Belgium, Italy, and United Kingdom).

The Paraguayan Congress declares stevia of "national interest" and recommends to the executive branch that the country strengthen its competitive stevia development, train stevia growers, begin market research, and promote investment.

2004

The Joint FAO/WHO expert committee (JECFA) is a globally recognized expert panel that convenes to provide guidance on food additive safety.

At its 63rd meeting, JECFA reviews available data on stevia glycosides and establishes temporary Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) of 2 mg/kg. The ADI is temporary pending submission of additional safety data. This means that a 150 lb/68 kg person could safely consume 15 1mg packages of sweetener made from rebiana every day over the course of his/her lifetime.

2007

Japan consumes more stevia than any other country. Today, stevia represents percent of the country's low- or zero-calorie sweetener market.

The 68th JECFA meeting extends the temporary ADI of 2mg/kg for steviol glycosides, pending the results of on-going studies. JECFA is expected to increase the ADI after satisfactory review of the data.

2008

In May 2008, results of a rigorous safety evaluation program that affirms earlier positive safety findings and addresses outstanding questions to definitively establish the safety of rebiana are e-published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Cargill and The Coca-Cola Company introduce Truvia™, the brand name for rebiana.

The 69th meeting of the WHO/JECFA Expert Committee on Food Additives concludes high purity steviol glycosides safe for use in food and beverages and establishes a permanent Average Daily Intake (ADI) level of 0-4mg/kg.

Agence Francaise De Security Sanitare Des Aliments (Afssa) concludes that the use of 97% rebaudioside A (rebiana) in food and beverages does not present a risk for consumers.

U.S. Food & Drug Administration announces it has no objection to the use of rebiana in food and beverages and finding that rebiana is Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS).

Truvia™ Rebiana and tabletop sweetener commercially launched and widely available in retail in the United States.

2009

Mexico approves steviol glycosides for use in food and beverages.

Switzerland approves the marketing of beverages with high purity rebaudioside A.

European Food Safety Authority begins safety review of pending petitions for use of steviol glycosides in food and beverages.

France issues 2 year approval for use of 97% rebaudioside A (rebiana) in food and beverages.