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NEWS RELEASE

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WPC34 and WPC80 obtain preliminary USAID approval

Action lays groundwork for opening a new dairy ingredients sales channel.

The U.S. dairy industry is a step closer to making food aid ingredient sales a commercial reality. On July 7, the Office of Food for Peace approved the U.S. Dairy Export Council's (USDEC's) application for whey protein concentrate 34 and 80 (WPC34 and WPC80) to be used in programs administered by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Once USAID and USDEC finalize specs and resolve remaining details, both whey protein concentrates will be included in the list of ingredients that implementing partners, such as private voluntary organizations, can purchase using USAID Food for Peace funds.

"This approval is one of the early steps in establishing a new, sustainable commercial channel for U.S. dairy ingredients, which was ushered in by the World Health Organization's 2008 food aid protein consumption recommendations," says Véronique Lagrange, USDEC vice president, strategic research & insights.

In late 2008, the World Health Organization proposed new guidelines for supplementary foods designed to treat and prevent moderate malnutrition. Those preliminary guidelines suggest that roughly one-third of the protein in food aid products (making up 8-10 percent of the product by weight) should be animal derived.

"Those in the dairy industry know the benefits of whey proteins, and, in fact, some companies who currently manufacture for the food aid market already utilize whey in their products," says Lagrange. "But shifting dairy proteins from relying primarily on donations of U.S. government surpluses into a broader commercial opportunity for U.S.

suppliers required that we convince aid agencies of their intrinsic nutritional and functional value.”

“With advancements in nutrition science, we know more about the types of proteins that are best suited for at-risk populations,” says Joan Parker, strategic advisor to USDEC on food aid formulations. “Whey protein is an ideal source of essential amino acids and branched chain amino acids that research has shown best meet the dietary needs of populations with limited access to proteins.”

To gain preliminary Food for Peace approval, USDEC collected information on the nutritional value of whey and proof of its viability for treatment of childhood malnutrition in developing countries. Literature detailing the benefits of whey proteins for building muscle mass in active men and women in developed nations is plentiful. Compiling the literature to demonstrate the nutritional value and proof of viability in products targeted at the malnourished required more time and effort, but ultimately paid off.

USDEC presented the evidence to a Food for Peace technical review panel earlier this year. Based on the application, the panel granted preliminary approval of WPC34 and WPC80 for use on food aid products. USDEC still needs to provide additional documents and complete other work to conclude the process.

“It could still be some time before final approval, but we do not anticipate any problems in establishing specs and supplying Food for Peace with other information they requested. We are working with our members to provide that input,” says Lagrange.

USDEC is also preparing further applications for sweet whey and whey protein isolates (WPI)—sweet whey as a source of proteins and energy in supplementary foods, WPI as a source of proteins in nutritional situations where low lactose and protein concentration are key.

“There is still a sense that dairy ingredients are only viable in food aid uses if donated, as opposed to purchased,” says Parker. “That is an inaccurate representation. USAID’s preliminary acceptance of WPC34 and WPC80 is a prime example of U.S. dairy finding a commercial niche while feeding hungry children and saving lives.”