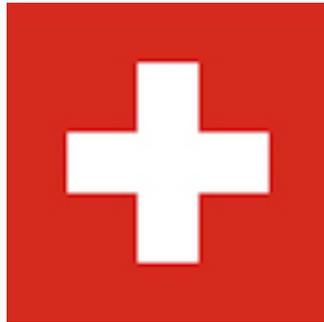


## **Switzerland**



### **Europe's outrider in the use of stevia**

written by: S. Stolzenburg  
(Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)

revised by: Daniela Peine and Axel Saalbach  
translated by: Axel Saalbach and B. Wiese

**Daforto GbR**  
Hohmannstraße 7  
04129 Leipzig  
Germany

Leipzig, September 2009

## Switzerland - Europe's outrider in the use of stevia

When it comes to food laws and consumer protection laws, Switzerland usually sticks to the standards of the European Union. In the case of stevia rebaudiana, the country made a big exception: since 2008, stevia has been legalised as a food additive in Switzerland, although there are some constraints on the producers.

For a long time, it was possible to purchase stevia leaves and concentrated stevia fluids in Swiss drugstores. But on the 1st of August 2007, the sale of stevia in liquid form was forbidden.<sup>1</sup> However, the sale of stevia leaves in tea blends was still legalised by the department of health (BAG) when the leaves did not exceed 2 percent of the mixtures. The department explained this exception with the recommendation of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) which attested that such small dosages cannot harm human health. In the aftermath, Switzerland decided to award individual permits for the production of stevia goods which fit into certain recommended standards and dosages.<sup>2</sup>

The first person who took advantage of this decision was a man named Umberto Leonetti from the Canton of Fribourg. He developed a sports drink named "Storms One" which is sweetened with stevia. Initially, the production of the beverage had to be stopped because of the canton's chemist who was not sure that the usage of stevia was allowed in Switzerland, but after Leonetti won a lawsuit he received an individual permit for "Storms One". Henceforth, he was allowed to produce and sell his stevia-sweetened beverage.<sup>3</sup> As of the 19th August of 2008, it is allowed to be marketed by the name of "Storms One Fertiggetränk", and it contains 0,02 percent of steviol glycosides.<sup>4</sup> After the lawsuit, Leonetti also began with the marketing of an ice tea by the name of "Nice Tea". Beginning on the 5th of February 2009, it was offered as "green tea lemon" and "black tea peach". Leonetti's creations were well received, so the warehousing enterprise "Manor" integrated them into its product proposals.<sup>5</sup>

Later, the Swiss department of health published a list of fifteen beverages and groceries which contain steviol glycosides or rather rebaudioside A and whose distribution had

---

1 Fehlmann, L. [2007]

2 Bundesamt für Gesundheit (BAG) [2008a]

3 Schaad, H. U. [2009]

4 Bundesamt für Gesundheit (BAG) [2008b]

5 Schaad, H. U. [2009]

already been legalised on the 16th of July 2009.<sup>6</sup>

In the European Union, Switzerland's approach was noted with a lot of interest, and among experts it was extensively commented. Scientists from the German University of Hohenheim, which has been involved in stevia research for many years called the Swiss legalisation the first real big step to a legalisation in the European Union. Consequentially, Professor Thomas Jungbluth (the dean of the faculty of agricultural sciences) explained that the plant has "[...] big future potential in the food industry". Moreover, experts presume that Switzerland has created a big competitive advantage by moving first, and they think that the European Union will hardly be able to catch up after it has legalised stevia sale as well. Doctor Udo Kienle, who works for the same institute as Professor Jungbluth, assumes that Switzerland will already have worked out sophisticated marketing and distribution structures when the trade barriers come down in the European Union.<sup>7</sup>

---

6 Bundesamt für Gesundheit (BAG) [2008a]

7 Lembens-Schiel, J. / Leonhardmair, F. [2008]

## Bibliography

- Bundesamt für Gesundheit (BAG) [2008a]: "Stevia Rebaudiana - Süsskraut", URL: <http://www.bag.admin.ch/themen/lebensmittel/04861/04972/index.html> (accessed on 1st September 2009)
- Bundesamt für Gesundheit (BAG) [2008b]: Provisorische Einzelbewilligungen für Steviol Glykoside gemäss Art. 2 Abs. 1 der Verordnung über die in Lebensmitteln zulässigen Lebensmitteln (ZuV; SR 817.022.31)
- Fehlmann, Laura [2007]: "Nicht direkt verboten", in: Bieler Tagblatt, 10th August 2007, page 12
- Lembens-Schiel, Johanna / Leonhardmair, Florian [2008]: "Stevia kommt: Schweiz führt als erster europäischer Staat vielversprechenden Natur-Süßstoff ein", press release of the University of Hohenheim, August 2008
- Schaad, Hans Ulrich [2009]: "Mit Stevia gesüsster Eistee lanciert", in: Berner Zeitung, 6th February 2009