

## **United States of America**



### **Stevia in the focus of large-scale enterprises**

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Leipzig, September 2009

## United States of America - Stevia in the focus of large-scale enterprises

In the United States of America, stevia has been known since the nineteen-twenties. However, it took until the eighties before the stevia trade boomed - but then, the boom was extensive. Especially as a sweetener, the plant became loved.<sup>1</sup>

After several producers of herbal tea, Unilever and its Lipton brand among others, began to use stevia in their tea blends, there was an anonymous complaint which targeted on disparaging stevia as an unacceptable food. The complaint was based on a study which was ordered by Monsanto, a seed manufacturer who owned a subsidiary enterprise named "NutraSweet" from 1985 to 2000. NutraSweet was (and is) the patentee of the synthetic sweetener Aspartame which competes with stevia-based sweeteners. This study has been disproved by other research works, and it is said that it was prepared with dubious researching methods. However, the complaint resulted in a ban on the sale of stevia.<sup>2</sup> This ban was enforced by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Moreover, the whole import of stevia into the United States was forbidden on 27th May of 1991.<sup>3</sup>

In the first half of the nineties, three petitions which asked for the recognition of stevia as a safe food were filed to the FDA. One of these requests was filed by the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA).<sup>4</sup> All three petitions were refused because of one reason: there were not enough studies to show the innocuousness of stevia and its components.<sup>5</sup>

In autumn 1994, the US-American Congress passed the "Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act" (DSHEA). This was a combination of new laws which (amongst other things) allowed the sale of stevia if it was marketed as a "dietary supplement".<sup>6</sup> Stevia still remained forbidden when it was marketed as a "food ingredient", but as a "dietary supplement" the same product was purchasable without a problem from then on. At the same time, it was forbidden to call it a "sweetener" or a "flavour enhancer".<sup>7</sup> Despite of that confusing legal situation many people began to use stevia as a sweetener again. Henceforth, stevia was once again sold in organic food shops and health food shops.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Caltvedt, S. / Rourke, K. [2006]

2 Mühlbauer, P. [2008]

3 U.S. Food and Drug Administration [2005]

4 Pendergast, W. R. [1991]

5 Center for Science in the Public Interest [2000]

6 McCaleb, R. [1997]

7 Simonsohn, B. [2008], page 68

8 Caltvedt, S. / Rourke, K. [2006]

In the year 2007, the stevia market gained momentum. The Coca-Cola Company decided in collaboration with Cargill Inc. to sell stevia based sweeteners with the brand name "Truvia". Amongst other things, "Truvia" was meant to be an ingredient for Coca-Cola's own beverage brands. To secure a safe position in the market, the Coca-Cola Company applied for 24 patents on the use of stevia in beverages. At the same time, Cargill Inc. applied for several patents on the use of stevia in groceries like yoghurt, ice cream and cereals. Since both companies yearned for the abrogation of the remaining trade barriers on stevia in the United States, the Coca-Cola Company examined clinical studies to fix the FDA up with the missing information about the innocuousness of stevia.<sup>9</sup>

In May 2008, Cargill Inc. took the plunge and filed for the release of the stevia sale and the declaration of innocuousness. The FDA decided in favour of Cargill Inc., but the decision did not affect the sale of stevia in general. Henceforth, individual products were legalised. Since then, Cargill Inc. has sold the sweetener "Truvia" in the United States as a tabletop sweetener and also as a food additive in several groceries.<sup>10</sup>

After the Coca-Cola Company had set the benchmark, PepsiCo. as their biggest rival had to succeed. In collaboration with the producing enterprise PureCircle they developed their own stevia based sweetener by the name of "PureVia". In December 2008, "PureVia" received FDA permission to be marketed. Immediately, PepsiCo. announced three new beverages with "Fuji Apple Pear", "Black & Blue Berry" and "Yumberry Pomegranate" flavour. All of them were meant to be sweetened with stevia.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Etter, L. / McKay, B. [2007]

10 Clark Tucker, A. [2008]

11 Anonymous [2008], page B7

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