

Making a whole grain case for flaxseed

Enreco, Inc., Sheboygan Falls, Wis., has challenged the notion flaxseed does not qualify as a whole grain because it's an oilseed. Instead, flaxseed should be viewed as a "pseudocereal" like quinoa, buckwheat and amaranth and qualify as a whole grain.

The Food and Drug Administration on Feb. 17, 2006, issued a draft guidance on what the term "whole grain" may include. The guidance listed quinoa, buckwheat and amaranth as whole grain, but it failed to list flaxseed.

According to Enreco, "Pseudocereal is a term applied to seeds that are not taxonomically related to grasses (i.e., cereals) but that are processed and consumed in similar fashion to cereal grains. Cereals are milled into flours, used in breads and tortillas, used in hot cereals and gruels, and used as breadings and toppings. All (of) these applications apply equally well to milled, whole grain flaxseed."

The F.D.A. draft guidance also said oilseeds are not whole grains although it did not list flaxseed specifically. The guidance said, "Soybeans and chickpeas should not be considered whole grains, but should be considered legumes. Products derived from legumes, oilseeds (sunflower seeds), and roots (e.g., arrowroot) should not be considered whole grains."

The board of directors of AmeriFlax, Bismarck, N.D., in an April 13, 2006, letter urged the F.D.A. to reconsider the exclusion of oilseeds. The letter said, "Whole grain flaxseed is an oilseed that has

comparable nutrients to the cereal grains listed by the F.D.A. Because of this fact, we believe that F.D.A. should include whole grain flaxseed in its definition of whole grains."

The Boston-based Whole Grains Council said oilseeds and legumes are not considered whole grains by the W.G.C. or the F.D.A. It lists flax, chia, sunflower seeds, soy and chickpeas as examples.

Enreco cites the book "World Oilseeds: Chemistry, Technology and Utilization" published in 1992 for its oilseed argument and states that the term "oilseed" is a non-scientific, non-taxonomic and non-nutritional term applied to crops that are processed for their oil value. Oilseeds include cereals (rice, corn), pseudocereals (flaxseed), legumes (soy) and fruit kernels (olive, palm), according to Enreco.

Sean Moriarty, president of Enreco, added, "The Whole Grains Council is free to designate 'whole grains' and 'pseudocereals' any way they wish, pending a final F.D.A. decision. As far as we know, no member of the flaxseed industry was ever invited to participate in their deliberations. We maintain that whole flaxseed is a pseudocereal based upon its processing and end-use characteristics as a food."


He added that whole flaxseed may fare better than whole grains in nutrient areas such as total dietary fiber (28% for flaxseed), omega-3 fatty acid content, protein content (22% for flaxseed) and other phytonutrient values. ■



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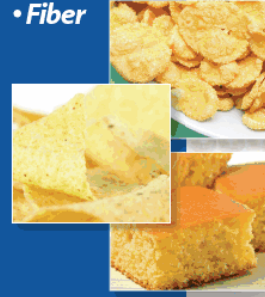
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competes with protein for water, formulators must add more water. They also should supplement the protein by adding more vital wheat gluten to avoid weak dough. All (of) these actions bring up issues of cost and mixing requirements, he said.

Cost issues are apparent in cookies sold at retail. Cookies with refined grains generally sell for a little more than 10c per oz, according to the Whole Grains Council. Cookies with whole grains may sell for more than 25c per oz.

In the food service institution arena, the average school meal costs between \$2.90 and \$3 with more than 60% of those costs going for labor and overhead. That leaves about \$1.15 to spend on actual food.

Julie Skolmowski of the School Nutrition Association discussed ways to deal with the increased costs last December at a Grains for Health Foundation event in Minneapolis. Options include increasing costs to students, absorbing costs, cutting back on the amount of whole grain products purchased and/or cutting back on other products or labor to keep whole grain options available.

She also gave options on ways to acclimate school children to the taste of whole grain products. The options include blending whole grain and non-whole grain products, gradually adding whole grain products to the school lunch menu, switching to whole grains without pointing it out to students and switching