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EFSA Says Fruit Juice Enzyme Is Safe

Agency finds no significant health risks from a pectolytic enzyme made with a non-genetically modified Aspergillus niger strain.

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The European Food Safety Authority said on Wednesday that a pectolytic food enzyme made with a non-genetically modified strain of Aspergillus niger can be considered safe for use in food processing under the conditions reviewed by the agency.

The enzyme contains endo-polygalacturonase, pectinesterase and pectin lyase activities. EFSA said it is intended for use in the production of fruit and vegetable juices and related products, where it helps break down pectins, a natural component of plant cell walls. In practical terms, that can improve extraction, clarification and overall

processing efficiency in beverages and other foods made from fruits and vegetables.

The assessment focused on how the enzyme is produced and purified, as well as toxicological data and the possibility of allergic reactions. EFSA said it did not identify significant risks to human health from consuming foods processed with the enzyme when it is used as intended.

The agency also said it reviewed manufacturing practices and regulatory standards meant to limit contamination from fermentation byproducts or other unwanted substances. According to the opinion, those controls were part of the basis for its safety conclusion.

Food enzymes are widely used in the beverage industry, including winemaking and juice production, because they can help release more liquid from fruit material and make finished products clearer. In Europe, EFSA opinions are an important step in determining whether such processing aids can move forward under food safety rules.

The enzyme evaluated by EFSA is produced by Aspergillus niger CCTCC M 2023236, a strain described in the assessment as not genetically modified. The agency’s conclusion applies to the specific conditions of use described in the review.