

The Wall Street Journal ran an extensive story on the FDA's approval of neotame, a new sweetener that is 7,000-13,000 sweeter than sugar.

Here are some excerpts from the story, which was titled, "NutraSweet Gets FDA Approval for Artificial Sweetener Neotame." The article was authored by Stephanie M. Horvath, a staff reporter for the Wall Street Journal and it was published in Monday, July 8, 2002.

Neotame is made by NutraSweet Co., which also produces aspartame. Aspartame is a widely used sugar substitute that is 200 times sweeter than sugar.

The Wall Street Journal interviewed NutraSweet President and Chief Executive Nick E. Rosa. He said NutraSweet plans "to push really hard, really fast" in marketing neotame. (The FDA published its approval of neotame on Tuesday, July 9, 2002.)

Rosa said that the main market is "soft drinks, dairy products including yogurt and frozen dairy desserts, and chewing gum." He said NutraSweet plans to sell it primarily to the soft-drink and food industries rather than directly to consumers as a tabletop sweetener.

The article noted neotame's strength -- it usually would take 8,000 teaspoons of sugar to equal the sweetening power of one teaspoon of neotame in most products. Mr. Rosa told the Wall Street Journal that the "economic benefit is extraordinary" for makers of soft drinks and other products that use sugar substitutes.

He added that "soft-drink companies will be able to get the same taste by using less sweetener and more water, cutting down on production costs."

Mr. Rosa noted that he does not see neotame replacing aspartame in the sweetener market, explaining to the Wall Street Journal, "We don't think there's going to be a 1-to-1 replacement."

Neotame can be blended with regular sweeteners such as corn syrup as well as with other sugar substitutes, Mr. Rosa explained.

Neotame is approved by the FDA for general use in foods, except for meat and poultry.

The Wall Street Journal also interviewed Alan Rulis who is the director of the FDA's office of food-additive safety. According to the Wall Street Journal, Rulis noted that the FDA found that there were no "risks or concerns" associated with neotame.

Rulis continued that neotame meets the "safety standards applied to all food additives."

Under FDA regulations, NutraSweet must file a special request for neotame to be considered for use on meat and poultry because those two foods fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture. NutraSweet has not request such consideration.

Neotame was released for use in Australia earlier in the year, used in soft drinks, yogurt and powdered gelatin mixes.

Mr. Rosa told the Wall Street Journal that he expects "three to five more products that use neotame are expected to be introduced shortly."

NutraSweet also manufactures the popular aspartame, widely sold under the Equal brand. After extensive studies and reviews, the FDA concluded it was safe and that further study wasn't needed.

In responding to the Wall Street Journal's queries, Mr. Rosa said, "Aspartame is absolutely safe. Any allegations made against it have never been proved.

(The original story can be obtained by contacting the Wall Street Journal or the Dow Jones Company.)

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