

US FDA proposes amended SOI for pasteurised orange juice

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued a proposed rule to amend an over 60-year-old Standard of Identity (SOI) for pasteurised orange juice to promote honesty and fair dealing for consumers. The proposed rule will also provide flexibility to the food industry. This rule furthers the agency's ongoing actions to review its portfolio of over 250 SOIS to make sure they are useful, relevant and serve consumers in the best possible way.

The proposed rule would reduce the minimum Brix requirement (a measurement that indicates the sugar content of a liquid) from 10.5 per cent to 10 per cent. The FDA is taking this action in response to a citizen petition submitted by the Florida Citrus Processors Association and Florida Citrus Mutual in 2022.

The FDA established an SOI for pasteurised orange juice in 1963 to protect the interests of consumers and reflect their expectations for orange juice. That standard set forth requirements for ingredients, manufacturing, juice content specifications and labelling, as well as the minimum Brix level of 10.5 per cent. However, the Brix level for Florida oranges has been steadily declining over the past few decades due to severe weather and a bacterial disease called “citrus greening,” making it challenging to meet the minimum Brix established in the SOI. To meet the FDA’s current requirements, some manufacturers have imported high-Brix orange juice from abroad.

The FDA expects that lowering the minimum Brix from 10.5 per cent to 10 per cent is unlikely to affect the taste of orange juice and will have a minimal impact on the nutrients found in orange juice. Proposing to update the SOI for pasteurised orange juice reflects the FDA’s efforts to strategically update and modernise food standards by better aligning this standard with current agricultural norms and providing greater production flexibility, while maintaining the basic nature and essential characteristics of the product.