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FDA Approves Health Claim for Brown Rice

Confirms popular whole grain may provide protection against heart disease and certain cancers

Arlington, VA, May 8, 2008 – Brown rice, a 100 percent whole grain food, joins the recognized ranks of healthful whole grains, according to an announcement this week from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that will allow brown rice food labels to bear the whole grain health claim. This will enable consumers to easily identify brown rice as a food to help them increase whole grain consumption and reduce their risk of heart disease and certain cancers.

Brown rice and other whole grain foods are widely recommended to consumers by the public health community including the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society and the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans for their protective effects against heart disease and certain cancers. In fact, the Dietary Guidelines recommend “making half of all grain servings whole,” or three daily whole grain servings in a standard 2,000-calorie reference diet. Still, data from a **recent consumer survey conducted by *EatingWell* magazine and the USA Rice Federation** show that the majority of Americans (65 percent) are not meeting their whole grains quota.¹

Consumers can now be on the lookout for brown rice labeled with the FDA whole grain health claim: **“Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers.”**

FDA’s action explicitly extends an existing health claim to include whole grain rice. For the first time, FDA states that all single ingredient whole grain foods qualify for the claim regardless of whether they meet the requirement for a minimum level of dietary fiber, as long as they meet the other general health claim requirements. The dietary fiber requirement was established in 1999 in order to monitor compliance with the claim. FDA now states that compliance for single ingredient whole grain foods will be monitored by examining package ingredient statements, not through fiber content. The science on which the health claim is based clearly acknowledges that the health benefits of whole grains are independent of their fiber content.

From a public health perspective, this news means that now there’s one more option for the nearly 90 percent of Americans who know that whole grains should be part of a healthy diet and the 70 percent who say they would be likely to increase whole grain consumption if the benefits were clearly listed on the package¹.

“Rice is the most popular grain around the world, which makes brown rice a great choice for increasing whole grain intake,” says Joann Slavin, PhD, RD, whole grains expert and Professor of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Minnesota. “In the United States, where chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancers are common, encouraging whole grain brown rice consumption could have a significant public health impact.”

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Rice. A World of Great Ideas

One hundred percent whole grain brown rice is an economical, nutritious and versatile food. With only the inedible hull removed, brown rice contains beneficial phytonutrients including antioxidants, anthocyanins, phytosterols, tocopherols oryzanol and many other potentially protective substances that have been found to help reduce the risk of heart disease, certain cancers, type II diabetes and potentially aid in weight maintenance. Brown rice also contains 15 vitamins and minerals, including B-vitamins, potassium, magnesium, selenium, iron, and 2 grams of fiber per one half cup of cooked rice.

According to the *EatingWell*/USA Rice survey:

- 87 percent of consumers know that whole grains are good for them. However, while more than 80 percent know whole grains can be protective against cardiovascular disease, less than two-thirds are aware that they also offers protection against certain cancers.
- There's still confusion about what foods are whole grains. While 80 percent of consumers know that brown rice is a whole grain, more than 80 percent also mistakenly think that bran cereal and breads marked simply as "wheat" are also whole grains.
- Most individuals (80 percent) said they would be likely to eat more whole grains if these foods were clearly labeled as whole grains; and another 68 percent said they would increase consumption if the health benefits were stated on the package.

"Since eating just one cup of brown rice is equivalent to two of the three recommended daily whole grain servings, the new health claim will certainly assist people in meeting their whole grain goals," said Slavin.

"This is a milestone event. Today brown rice joins the recognized ranks of healthful foods that are entitled to make this claim. Having this information on packages of brown rice will help consumers increase whole grain consumption and reduce their risk of heart disease and some cancers," said Al Montna, chairman of the USA Rice Federation.

The FDA action adds support to the growing body of scientific data that shows that rice is a healthy food choice. Recent research found that rice eaters are more likely to eat a diet consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.² Americans who eat rice have healthier diets than non-rice eaters and may have reduced risk for chronic diseases including heart disease and type II diabetes.^{2,3}

Compared to people who do not eat rice, people who eat rice consume less added sugar and fat; consume more nutrients, such as folic acid, potassium and iron that are contained in rice products; are less likely to be overweight or have an increased waist circumference; have 34 percent reduced risk of having high blood pressure; and have a 21 percent reduced risk of metabolic syndrome.³

In both whole grain brown and enriched white forms, rice is a complex carbohydrate that is naturally low in calories, is sodium-, gluten- and cholesterol-free, has just a trace of fat, and contains no trans or saturated fat. Due to its mild flavor, rice also complements many other healthy foods, including vegetables, lean meat, seafood, poultry, beans and soy foods. Rice is nutritious due to its nutrient profile, and it is also highly-digestible and non-allergenic, and can be enjoyed by young and old alike. Rice poses no risk for those who are sensitive to or intolerant of gluten or other proteins commonly found in other grain-based foods.

U.S.-grown rice accounts for nearly 88 percent of the rice consumed in America, and there is an ample supply of U.S.-grown rice for the domestic market. Rice is grown and harvested by farmers in five south central states and California according to the highest quality standards. The U.S. produces short, medium and long grain rice, as well as specialty rices including jasmine, basmati, and arborio, red aromatic and black japonica, among others.

For more information, visit www.usarice.com.

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1. *Whole Grain Consumer Awareness Telephone Survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, April 2008.*
2. *Betres-Marquez S.P., Jensen H.H., and Upton J.L. (2005) Trends in rice consumption and contribution of rice to the total diet of Americans. Abstract presented at Texas Dietetic Association Meeting.*
3. *Fulgoni III, V.L., Fulgoni, S.A., Upton, J.L., and Moon, M. (2008) Rice consumption is associated with a greater nutrient density, lower blood pressure, decreased body weight, smaller waist circumference and a reduced risk for metabolic syndrome in adults. Experimental Biology meeting abstracts [on CD-ROM], Abstract #1081.*