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## New Standard for Popular Stevia-based Sweetener to Assure Manufacturers and Consumers of Product's Quality

*Food and Beverage Manufacturers Invited to Comment on Proposed Rebaudioside A Standard through USP's Food Chemicals Codex Forum*

**Rockville, Md., January 5, 2009** — Responding to the growing popularity of a plant-based sweetener, the U.S. Pharmacopeial (USP) Convention today announced it is developing a new standard to be included in the *Food Chemicals Codex (FCC)* that will help food and beverage manufacturers assure the product's quality for consumers. USP is seeking comments from the food and beverage industry as well as all other interested parties on the proposed new standard for this new sweetener, Rebaudioside A.

Rebaudioside A is a stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni)-based sweetener used in foods and beverages around the world as an alternative to sugar and other non-caloric sugar substitutes, such as sucralose and aspartame. Rebaudioside A is isolated from the leaves of the Latin American stevia plant and gives the plant leaves their sweet taste. Use of Rebaudioside A in food and beverage products in the United States is poised to increase sharply as manufacturers begin to develop and launch a series of new products using this new ingredient. The proposed *FCC* standard for Rebaudioside A is available for review to all interested parties via the *FCC Forum*—the mechanism through which USP accepts public comment on standards to be included in the *FCC*—before the final standard is published in the compendium.

“As U.S. manufacturers begin to incorporate this new ingredient into their products, it is important for these companies and, ultimately, consumers to have some sort of assurance that the Rebaudioside A being used is of high quality, is free of harmful contaminants and is consistent in its contents from one batch to the next,” said Darrell Abernethy, M.D., Ph.D., chief science officer for USP. “By proposing a standard that all manufacturers—in the United States and around the world—can participate in the development of and subsequently choose to adhere to, USP and food and beverage manufacturers can partner to assure the quality of this ingredient. Consumers also are able to participate in this process. We believe such a quality standard is critical given that Rebaudioside A's use as a sweetener is relatively new in the United States.”

The proposed monograph standard became available in the *FCC Forum* section of USP's Web site ([www.usp.org/fcc/forum](http://www.usp.org/fcc/forum)) on December 31, 2008, for 90 days. After this comment period, USP's Food Ingredients Expert Committee, which comprises a group of independent, scientific experts, will approve the final monograph to be included in the 2009 *FCC* supplement.

The *FCC* monograph for Rebaudioside A will contain specifications related to the ingredient's identity, purity and potential impurities, and will include supporting analytical test procedures and use of USP chemical reference standards. The chemical reference standards will be established through USP's open, independent and collaborative testing process to ensure their suitability for the intended uses in the monograph test procedures. Once developed, the *FCC* Rebaudioside A monograph and associated reference standards will provide an objectively established standard

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against which both producers and purchasers can compare their ingredients to assure their quality.

### **USP and FCC**

USP is an independent, non-profit, scientific organization that has been setting chemical standards for close to 200 years. These standards are used in more than 130 countries throughout the world. In 2006, USP acquired the *FCC*, a compendium of internationally recognized standards that helps to assure the quality and purity of food ingredients used by manufacturers who produce food products, from the Institute of Medicine. USP released the sixth edition of the *FCC*—the first edition published under its direction—in February 2008. A new edition of the *FCC* will be released every two years, with supplements published between each edition.

For more information, visit [www.usp.org](http://www.usp.org) or email [mediarelations@usp.org](mailto:mediarelations@usp.org).

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### **USP—Advancing Public Health Since 1820**

The United States Pharmacopeial (USP) Convention is a private, non-profit, standards-setting organization that advances public health through public standards and related programs that help ensure the quality, safety, and benefit of medicines and foods. USP's standards are recognized and used worldwide. For more information about USP visit <http://www.usp.org/newscenter>. **FY0923**