

Cannabis situation still looks foggy for food



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By

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NEW ORLEANS — Talk of cannabis filled educational sessions and infiltrated trade show booths at IFT19, the Institute of Food Technologists' annual meeting and exposition. Recent government action has created opportunities for incorporating cannabis extracts, including cannabidiol (C.B.D.), C.B.D. oil and even marijuana in some instances, into foods and beverages, but much is still unknown.

Since cannabis (*Cannabis sativa*)

is a plant, the food, beverage and agriculture industries may face issues similar to ones dealt with in other plant-based foods: mycotoxin and other crop quality concerns, interstate commerce and reliable ingredient suppliers.

Food safety issues may arise as well.

“They (food safety issues) are not really any different than any other food commodity,” said Thuy Vu, director of operations and regulatory affairs at Hammer Enterprises Integrated Solutions, Evergreen, Colo., a vertically integrated hemp company that turns hemp into oil or C.B.D. isolates.

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 was enacted last December and created a new category of cannabis classified as “hemp” as it removed hemp from the Controlled Substances Act. Hemp in the United States now is defined as cannabis and cannabis derivatives that contain no more than 0.3%

concentrations of the psychoactive compound delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (T.H.C.). More than that amount means the substance is marijuana.



Looking to Colorado

The Food and Drug Administration is discussing how to regulate products containing cannabis or cannabis-derived products, including C.B.D. The F.D.A. might look to Colorado, which already has regulations on cannabis in place. Ms. Vu spoke in a June 5 cannabis session at IFT19 in New Orleans. Ms. Vu previously was a senior environmental public health investigator for the city and county of Denver.

She said that under Colorado law, the hemp or C.B.D. used in a food or beverage must come from a state or country that has a food safety program for hemp. Companies on packaging must clearly identify hemp as an ingredient and clearly identify C.B.D. and the amount of C.B.D. if it is added as an isolate. Companies also must include a statement that the F.D.A. has not evaluated the product for safety or efficacy.

“Who must register with the state health department (in Colorado)?” Ms. Vu said. “Everybody.”

“Everybody” ranges from processors to those who store product to retailers.

Crop threats come in the forms of yeast, mold, powdery mildew, bud rot, mycotoxin, black mold, spider mites, rust mites, aphids and thrips, she added. Colorado’s department of agriculture will examine hemp fields to make certain the T.H.C. content is no more than 0.3%. If it is more, the fields may be burned, Ms. Vu said.

In the same session, Peter S. Pressman, M.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Neurology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Aurora, Colo., spoke about the need for caution when adding marijuana to foods, which is legal in Colorado.

When marijuana is contained in a food matrix, as opposed to when it is smoked, the human brain is slow to notice the compound, he said. At first a person eating the marijuana-infused item will not feel the effects and thus might eat more, which Dr. Pressman called “one brownie, two brownie, three.” Once the T.H.C. eventually tickles the brain receptor, it could be more potent.

Dr. Pressman also said marijuana-infused food could affect diabetics negatively, and he warned against the ingestion of marijuana by pregnant women in their first trimester.



Investing in C.B.D.

On the trade show floor, Layn Corp. launched a new line of C.B.D. ingredients even though the F.D.A. has yet to give definitive regulations on products with C.B.D. The company supplies C.B.D. oil, C.B.D. distillate and crystallized isolate, which offers the purest C.B.D. People who stopped by Layn’s booth at IFT19 worked in various food and beverage categories, including baked foods, chocolate and gummies, said Elaine Yu, president of Layn USA, Newport Beach, Calif.

The company has an advantage over other C.B.D. suppliers in that Layn USA already has experience in the food industry, she said. The company for more than 20 years has taken extractions from stevia and monk fruit to use as sweeteners.

Layn USA is part of China-based Guilin Layn Natural Ingredients Corp. As part of a \$60 million investment, Layn will build a U.S. manufacturing facility that should be completed in the fall of 2020. It will be capable of processing a minimum of 5,000 tons of hemp biomass per year, which will yield 160 tons of C.B.D. and 290 tons of oil. Layn is in the final stages of selecting a location for the facility, which probably will be in the Midwest, Ms. Yu said.

Ms. Yu said she recognized the regulatory situation of C.B.D needs to become clearer.

“There is a long path to go,” she said.

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