Summary of responses to call for evidence on Ashwagandha

Summary of stakeholder responses after the call for evidence on on ashwagandha food supplements

Introduction

The call for evidence on ashwagandha was issued on 08 July 2024 and closed on 02 September 2024.

It was launched to gather information on ashwagandha food supplements in order to build an evidence package to inform future FSA risk management advice.

The key information which the call for evidence sought views on was:

- any available information/data on the safety assessment of food supplements containing ashwagandha, including toxicological testing and relevant toxicological data (this can include any communication you have received by consumers reporting any potential adverse effects)
- any testing that has been carried out that informs the safety and stability ashwagandha in its proposed use
- any scientific evidence used to support claims being made
- any sourcing information and specifications of the plant part material used
- the final product's full list of ingredients (including ratios/percentages) and specification. This also includes any available information on levels of contaminants (such as heavy metals) in the final product
- information on the types of products on the market and which are the most prevalent (for example food supplements containing dried root or food supplements containing ashwagandha extract)
- any information on the specialised formulation that is intended to modify the absorption or metabolism of the supplement, e.g. nanoformulation
- any relevant information regarding the manufacturing process, including control processes used, such as testing for pesticides, contaminants etc. In the cases of extracts information any information on the types of extraction and the chemicals used in extraction is also needed
- consumer information to better understand our audience. Please provide any market/sales data on ashwagandha food supplements, including any consumer demographics info such as age, sex and other relevant characteristics. Any information specifically related to consumption/sales to pregnant women or children is welcome
- any other pertinent information or issues concerning these products

Summary of stakeholder responses

A total of 19 responses were received in the call for evidence: 8 responses from food businesses, 7 responses from industry representatives, 3 responses from members of the public and 1 response from a university research team.

The FSA are grateful to those stakeholders who responded.

Next steps

The responses submitted will be thoroughly reviewed by the FSA and provided to the Committee on Toxicity (CoT). CoT is a committee of independent experts that provides advice to the Food Standards Agency, the Department of Health and Social Care and other Government Departments and Agencies on matters concerning the toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment. More information regarding the CoT's role can be found here.

A risk assessment will then be conducted and the outcome published. The risk assessment as well as the evidence package created will be reviewed on a 4-country basis via the Nutrition related Labelling Composition and Standards Provisional Common Framework to inform future risk management advice.