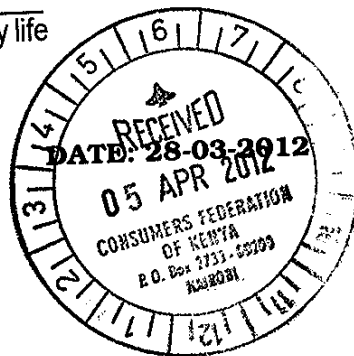




Kenya Bureau of Standards
Quality products for quality life



KEBS Head Office
P.O. Box 54974, Nairobi 00200
Tel: +254 (0) 20 6005490; 6005506;
Mobile: 0722 202137/8;
0734 600 471/2
Fax: +254 (0) 20 6009 660
Direct Dial: +254 (0) 20 694 8000
E-Mail: info@kebs.org
Web: http://www.kebs.org

Ref: KEBS/STA/1/2/Vol.3/(66)

Mr. Stephen Mutoro,
Secretary General
Consumer Federation of Kenya,
P. O. Box 2733 - 00200
NAIROBI

Dear *Mr. Mutoro,*

RE: SODIUM BENZOATE USED AS FOOD ADDITIVE

Your letter dated 8th March 2012 on Sodium Benzoate Chemical as Food additive refers.

We appreciate your concern regarding the safety of the use of food additives in food products.

While it is true that sodium benzoate in the presence of ascorbic acid may react to form benzene ring, the resultant amount have been found to be far below the WHO recommended safe limits. Random tests that we have done also show the levels are within the WHO limits for drinking water and it is not possible to clearly link these levels to benzoates since benzene rings are available in many forms in our environment including the air and water.

The quality and use of all permitted food additives including sodium benzoates are controlled by WHO/FAO purity specifications as published by the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) while the limit for their use is in compliance with the Kenya Standard on General Standard for Food Additives (KS CODEX STAN 192) that stipulates the maximum use levels, which is an equivalent of Codex (WHO/FAO) General Standard for Food Additives. We are not aware or advised by any other regulatory body of any plans of phasing out sodium benzoates as a preservative as such decision should be based on risk and safety evaluation/report preferably by JECFA which is the scientific expert arm of WHO/FAO on matters related to food additives and to which the government is a member.

Yours *Sincerely*

[Signature]
Eva Oduor (Mrs.)
Managing Director.
PM/mkn

KEBS Coast Region
P.O. Box 99376, Mombasa 80100
Tel: +254 (0) 41 2317050; 2230939/38/40
Fax: +254 (0) 41 229 448
E-mail: kebs-msa@kebs.org

KEBS Lake Region
P.O. Box 2949, Kisumu 40100
Tel: +254 (0) 57 202 8396; 202 9549
Fax: +254 (0) 57 202 7814
E-mail: kebs-kisumu@kebs.org

KEBS Rift Valley Region
P.O. Box 2138, Nakuru 20100
Tel: +254 (0) 51 221 0553/5; 221 1208
Fax: +254 (0) 51 221 0076
E-Mail: kebs-nakuru@kebs.org

KEBS ML Kenya Region
P.O. Box 1790, Nyeri 10100
Tel: +254 (0) 61 203 1410/1
Fax: +254 (0) 61 203 2038
E-Mail: kebs-nyeri@kebs.org

KEBS North Eastern Region
P.O. Box 978, Garissa 70100
Tel: +254 (0) 46 2519
Fax: +254 (0) 46 3455
E-Mail: kebs-garissa@kebs.org

Natu Court, Block F-45
Ngong Road/Ring Rd Kilimani
P.O Box 2733-00200, City Square
NAIROBI
Website: www.cofek.co.ke



Tel: 254-20-2300859, 3861718, 3861
Cell: 254-715555550, 736965590
0770700007
Fax: 254-3861719
Email: hotline@cofek.co.ke

Consumers Federation of Kenya

CONFIDENTIAL

8th March, 2012

Ms Evah Oduor
Managing Director
Kenya Bureau of Standards
Off Kapiti Road
NAIROBI

Dear *Evah,*

RE: SODIUM BENZOATE CHEMICAL AS A FOOD ADDITIVE

From the outset, allow the Consumers Federation of Kenya (Cofek) and I to congratulate you on your recent appointment as the KEBS Managing Director. We hope that under your tenure, KEBS will not disappoint and frustrate consumer interests as it has always been the case. We have gigantic expectations from your leadership.

As you may be aware, Sodium benzoate (also known as E211) is a preservative used to prevent mold from growing in soft drinks. We are also made aware that it can react to form the carcinogenic chemical benzene. Other studies have found that the said chemical can cause damage to human DNA, with possibility of switching off certain sections of the genetic code and increasing the risk of Parkinson's disease and cirrhosis of the liver.

It is public knowledge, for instance, that the Coca-Cola Company has announced that it is in the process of phasing out the use of food additive sodium benzoate in the United Kingdom. This was after a number of studies have linked it to a wide variety of health problems. Sodium benzoate has also been blamed for increasing children's risk of hyperactivity in a study by researchers from Southampton University.

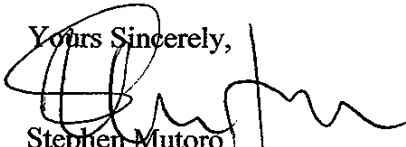
Although the British Food Standards Agency did not ban sodium benzoate, increasing cancer cases in Kenya call for a review of suitability of sodium benzoate as a food additive. In this regard, we are seeking for Kenya Bureau of Standards opinion on this delicate matter. In your response, we will request the following;



- (a) Standards for procuring and use of sodium benzoate
- (b) Process of assuring quality control and compliance to use and limitation of risks associated with sodium benzoate
- (c) Any plans of phasing out the chemical and by when
- (d) Details of how KEBS is dealing with other carcinogenic food additives and mitigation thereof.

Looking forward to your early and favourable response. Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,



Stephen Mutoro
Secretary General

CC:

Mr Nathan Kalumbu
President,
Central, East & West Africa (CEWA) Business Unit
The Coca-Cola Company
NAIROBI