

Soda Industry Desperate to Avoid Cancer Classification of Toxic Chemicals Used to Make Caramel Color

By *Ethan A. Huff, Natural News*

The processed beverage industry is fighting tooth and nail to stop federal regulators from publicly identifying a toxic ingredient in many popular cola brands as being a cancer-causing chemical. 4-methylimidazole (4-MI), a chemical used to make the "caramel color" agent added to Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Snapple Group Inc.'s Dr. Pepper, and Whole Foods' 365 cola, among others, has been found to cause cancer in mammals, and yet the *U.S. Food and Drug Administration* (FDA) refuses, thus far, to ban it from use in food.

Last year, the *Center for Science in the Public Interest* (CSPI), a public advocacy group, filed a regulatory petition with the FDA to have caramel color that contains 4-MI banned from food. Not only does 4-MI-laden caramel color serve "a non-essential, cosmetic purpose" in food, but caramel color also does not have to be produced using 4-MI in the first place, which means banning the chemicalized form of caramel color is really a no-brainer when it comes to protecting public health (http://www.naturalnews.com/031383_caramel_coloring_cola.html).

But it has been more than a year since the original petition was filed, and the FDA has done nothing so far to protect the public from 4-MI in beverages, which in some tests was nearly five times higher in certain beverages than the California legal limit allows for the chemical. California's Proposition 65, the *Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986*, requires that cancer-causing agents be publicly identified when they exceed a certain level, which means that beverages containing 4-MI caramel color legally have to be labeled as causing cancer (<http://www.oehha.org/prop65.html>).

According to the *LA Weekly*, Coca-Cola and Pepsi plan to slightly modify their recipes for producing caramel color in order to meet California's requirements, as well as to quell the public relations nightmare that is quickly brewing for these two beverage giants. But these modifications will only slightly reduce the amount of 4-MI in caramel color rather than eliminate it completely, a move that will still needlessly expose the public to a carcinogenic chemical (<http://blogs.laweekly.com>).

"Carcinogenic colorings have no place in the food supply, especially considering that their only function is a cosmetic one," said CSPI executive director Michael F. Jacobson in an earlier statement, noting that the *National Toxicology Program* (NTP) says there is "clear evidence" that 4-MI, as well as 2-methylimidazole, another chemical byproduct of caramel color production, can cause cancer in humans.

"Coke and Pepsi, with the acquiescence of the FDA, are needlessly exposing millions of Americans to a chemical that causes cancer," he added during a recent statement to *Reuters*.