

The International Numbering System (INS) for Food Additives



Functions of Food Additives

Different food additives have different uses. Some of them can be used to:

- Improve the palatability of food
- Improve the appearance of processed food
- Keep the quality or stability of food more effectively
- Preserve food to extend its storage life
- Improve food safety
- Minimise food wastage



What is INS?

The names of many food additives are long and complex. For the benefit of consumers, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has adopted the International Numbering System (INS) for Food Additives, which provides internationally agreed identification numbers for food additives.



Identification Number	Food Additive	Technological Function(s)
328	Ammonium lactate	acidity regulator, flour treatment agent
329	Magnesium lactate (DL-)	acidity regulator, flour treatment agent
330	Citric acid	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt
331	Sodium citrates	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, emulsifier, stabilizer
331(i)	Sodium dihydrogen citrate	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, emulsifier, stabilizer
331(ii)	Disodium monohydrogen citrate	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, emulsifier, stabilizer
331(iii)	Trisodium citrate	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, emulsifier, stabilizer
332	Potassium citrates	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, stabilizer
332(i)	Potassium dihydrogen citrate	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, stabilizer
332(ii)	Tripotassium citrate	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, stabilizer
333	Calcium citrates	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt, firming agent
334	Tartaric acid (L (+)-)	acidity regulator, antioxidant, emulsifying salt
335	Sodium tartrates	stabilizer, antioxidant, emulsifying salt
335(i)	Monosodium tartrate	stabilizer, antioxidant, emulsifying salt

Food additives are grouped into 23 functional classes according to their technological functions so that the consumers can recognise their proposed uses:

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|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Acid | 9. Emulsifier | 17. Humectant |
| 2. Acidity regulator | 10. Emulsifying salt | 18. Preservative |
| 3. Anti-caking agent | 11. Firming agent | 19. Propellant |
| 4. Anti-foaming agent | 12. Flavour enhancer | 20. Raising agent |
| 5. Antioxidant | 13. Flour treatment agent | 21. Stabilizer |
| 6. Bulking agent | 14. Foaming agent | 22. Sweetener |
| 7. Colour | 15. Gelling agent | 23. Thickener |
| 8. Colour retention agent | 16. Glazing agent | |

The INS does not include flavours, chewing gum bases, as well as dietetic and nutritive additives.

In Hong Kong, not all chemicals present in the INS are allowed to be used in food. The food trade should observe the statutory requirements under Part V of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Chapter 132, Laws of Hong Kong) and its subsidiary legislations.

The Use of INS in Hong Kong

People with allergic conditions, such as asthma patients, may experience hypersensitive reaction to certain food additives such as sulphur dioxide. In order to protect their health, starting from 10 July 2007, the names (or the identification numbers under the INS) and functions of the additives used in a prepackaged food must be listed on the food label under the regulations*. People with allergic conditions can refer to the food label to check whether the food item is safe to consume.

* The Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) (Amendment) Regulation 2004 was enacted in July 2004. The three-year grace period will lapse on 9 July 2007.



Two labelling formats of food additives under the regulations:



Format A:
Functions and names of the food additives used must be listed on a food label.

Ingredients:
Ham, water, salt, sugar, dextrose, humectant (sodium lactate, sodium phosphates), antioxidant (sodium acetate, sodium isoascorbate), preservative (sodium nitrite)

OR



Format B:
Functions and identification numbers of the food additives used must be listed on a food label.

Ingredients:
Cheddar cheese (milk, salt, starter cultures, enzymes), cottage cheese (skim milk, starter cultures, enzymes), milk solids non fat, emulsifier (339), acidity regulator (270, 331, 341), preservative (200), colour (160b), rennet from cow, vitamin D3, water

The public can refer to the Centre for Food Safety website (www.cfs.gov.hk) for the identification numbers of food additives.

Enquiries

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