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QM014	20/03/20	Issue 9	Approved by: M Rothon

ALLERGEN POLICY

The Company handles a number of the major food allergens currently recognised by the industry, namely **celery**, **sesame** and **mustard**. Their use is very carefully monitored and where possible these allergens are handled in a separate area (allergen room).

The Company supplies products containing gluten (**wheat** in wheat flour and baking powder; **barley** in vinegar powder), **sesame** seeds, **celery** (seeds and ground) and **mustard** (seeds and flour) on a commodity basis as well as repacking into smaller (catering size) units. These items may also be present in certain spice blends. Their use is very carefully monitored and where possible these allergens are handled in a separate area.

Consideration has also been made for ingredients that contain allergens as sub-components, with examples being the presence of **wheat** gluten in cumin and coriander or **mustard** in cumin (due to harvesting in areas where wheat and mustard is grown) or the presence of naturally occurring **sulphites** in ginger, garlic, mustard and onion.

Peanuts and their derivatives have been eliminated from the company's raw material base both as direct stock items and as additions to purchased raw materials. There is a potential for nuts other than peanuts to be required by clients. This use will be restricted to a commodity supply basis and these materials will neither be pre-packed or repacked in house. The company considers that through elimination and carefully controlled use, the potential for contamination by nuts and materials associated with nut allergy has been greatly minimised, if not completely removed.

The company uses rapeseed oil in most of its blends as a processing aid. This will only be reviewed if rapeseed oil becomes implicated with nut allergy reactions.

An assessment of the potential content of allergens will be made from reviewing suppliers' technical specifications prior to approving new materials / suppliers for future use and from information provided on the Supplier Self Assessment Questionnaire.

Audit and Review

Compliance with this policy will be audited, as part of the annual HACCP review, by the internal audit department. The results of the audit will be presented to the management review committee to verify the correctness of the statement and to alter the statement to reflect any in-house changes or external alterations to the perceived requirements for compliance to good manufacturing practice.

In the event of the Company becoming aware of any allergen incidents within the wider food industry of direct relevance, for example deliberate adulteration of spices or accidental contamination, it will seek clarification from its suppliers and review the raw material vulnerability and supplier risk assessments as necessary. For example, in 2015

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the FSA highlighted the possible contamination of cumin and paprika with peanut and almond protein following a number of product recalls in the US.

Allergen storage

All allergens listed above must be stored in the dedicated allergen racking provided following visual assessments on delivery to ensure acceptability eg absence of damages to packaging etc. Materials must be stored and labelled according to the requirements of QM025 - Receipt & Storage of Materials and Packaging.

Allergen Spillage

In the event of any spillages from sacks or containers containing allergens, all exposed or conceivably contaminated food materials must be bagged, sealed and then removed to the skip outside the building. All equipment used for removing the allergen spill must be thoroughly cleaned after use ensuring no allergen debris is transferred throughout the site prior to cleaning. All surfaces of any contaminated equipment and the surrounding area potentially exposed to the allergen must be cleaned and the machines stripped, vacuumed and wet washed.

Allergen spills are treated with the same severity as glass breakages and as such, the details of any allergen spillage and actions taken must be recorded on the **Breakage Report Form** (reference QM035A).

Staff awareness

Staff and visitors are not permitted to bring any nut or nut containing products on site as World of Spice is a nut free operation.

Cleaning Procedures

The allergen packing room is used only for products which are allergens in themselves or for seasoning mixes containing them. Staff and visitors entering this area must put on a red hair net, white overalls and blue gloves (as required) prior to entry to this room; all these items are available at the entrance to this room and must be removed upon exit.

It is not practical for the company to dismantle all equipment and complete detailed cleaning programmes between blending or packing of allergens or allergen containing materials. Line clearance checks and the following cleaning arrangements are in place to reduce the risk of carryover of allergens to the next production run.

On completion of each blending or packing run with an allergen or allergen containing material, a clean down of all equipment including hoppers, filling machines, scales, scoops and conveyors must be completed using the dedicated allergen cleaning equipment to reduce the potential for carry over to the next product. All accessible surfaces and the surrounding floor areas must be vacuumed.

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Checks on the effectiveness of cleaning must be undertaken ensuring the finished cleaning standard is met ie 'no visible debris remaining'. On no account may production operations resume until clearance has been given by the team leader following a visual inspection of the cleaning standard.

Although risk assessment has confirmed acceptability of the above cleaning regime, where production scheduling permits a full wet clean should be completed thereby ensuring potential carry-over of allergen material is minimised to negligible levels. As above, checks on the effectiveness of cleaning must be undertaken prior to a resumption of production activities.

Any swept-up material must be bagged and taken directly to the waste skip.

The Team Leader must sign against the dates that the cleaning standard is checked.

Any breakdowns or missing parts must be recorded on the **Machinery Maintenance & Repair Record** (reference QM034D).

Because complete absence of allergens cannot be guaranteed, products are labelled with suitable allergen warning statements (eg. 'May contain celery, mustard, sesame or gluten') in addition to specific allergen indications as required by legislation.