

U.S. FDA Expands Permitted Uses of Spirulina-Based Blue Colours Following GNT's Petition

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the permitted uses of spirulina extract as a colour additive to all foods generally, supporting broader use of natural blues across the U.S. food industry.

Spirulina extract was the first natural blue colour additive approved for food use in the United States. Its permitted uses have expanded incrementally through multiple regulatory amendments, including approval for use in beverages in 2022.

Each of these expansions was supported by petitions filed by GNT, which creates EXBERRY colours from non-GMO fruit, vegetables, and plants. There has also been sustained investment in the technical capabilities, quality systems, and supply infrastructure required for the reliable commercialisation of spirulina-based colours.

This update is particularly relevant for bakery applications, where demand for natural green tones continues to grow and often depends on access to natural blue colour solutions. Historically, spirulina extract has been used in decorations, fillings, and coatings, with more limited use directly in baked doughs and batters. Clearer regulatory pathways now support more confident planning for plant-based colour solutions in these applications, including pistachio- and matcha-inspired flavours and seasonal offerings.

“With more natural blue options now permitted, the focus is on helping manufacturers understand what’s possible,” said Jane MacDonald, Director of Technical Development at GNT USA. “GNT brings regulatory experience and technical application expertise to support informed decision-making, as customers evaluate natural blue solutions within their specific formulations and commercial goals.”

As part of the same communication, the FDA also addressed how manufacturers may use voluntary labelling claims related to the absence of FD&C colours on food labels, a move intended to support the industry’s transition away from synthetic dyes.

The agency said “companies will now have flexibility to claim products contain “no artificial colours” when the products do not contain petroleum-based colours.” Such claims were previously limited to food and drink that did not contain any added colouring ingredients.