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## **EU accommodates Sri Lanka's request for the use of Sulphur Dioxide in processing of Cinnamon**

The European Union (EU) has allowed Sri Lanka's request for the use of Sulphur Dioxide in the processing of Cinnamon.

Sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) has been used for 2 purposes, viz for its biocidal activity and for bleaching. The cinnamon industry has traditional practices in cinnamon processing and the use of SO<sub>2</sub> in fumigation has been known to the industry for centuries. Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) fumigation keeps the hygienic quality and fumigation functions as a preservative, anti-browning agent, and helps in the fixation of the characteristic golden yellow colour of Ceylon Cinnamon.

The European Union is an important buyer for Ceylon Cinnamon and 5-10% of the total value of exports in the recent past has been to the EU region. Since July 2004, Sri Lanka has encountered problems with a number of consignments of "Ceylon Cinnamon" exported to the European Communities on the grounds that consignments contained sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). The EC authorities have cited that this action was taken under a technical regulation relating to import of foodstuffs to the European Communities contained in European Parliament and Council Directive No. 95/2/EC of 20 February 1995 and its subsequent amendments.

The Department of Commerce in consultation with Spices Traders' Association, Department of Agriculture and the Trade Representation at Geneva made Sri Lanka's request through WTO to CODEX ALIMENTARIOUS COMMISSION in 2006 as there was no accepted standard established for SO<sub>2</sub> in cinnamon processing. The International Standard (Codex GSFA) adopted at the 29th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, held in Geneva in July 2006. It has approved maximum level of use of 150 mg/kg for sulphites (including sulphur dioxide) in Food Category 12.2.1 "Herbs and Spices."

Following continued lobbying by the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Brussels with the EU, the EU has allowed Sri Lanka's request for recognition of the CODEX standard on SO<sub>2</sub> for cinnamon processing by the EU. Several presentations made to EU during last 2-3 years, have produced the above tangible result for the benefit of Sri Lankan cinnamon exporters. Commission Directive No. 2010/69/EU of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2010, amending the Directive

95/2/EC, authorises the use of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) in Cinnamon at a maximum level of 150 mg/kg.

Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum* Blume) known in trade as 'Ceylon Cinnamon' has been one of the most important spices since the early evolution of trade. Cinnamon represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest export agricultural crop of Sri Lanka. It supports the livelihood of over 70,000 small holder cinnamon growers & provides employment to over 350,000 people. At present, Sri Lanka is the single largest exporter of true cinnamon in the world accounting for 85% of the world demand for cinnamon.

Embassy of Sri Lanka  
Brussels

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