

SYNDIAN GO FOR NON GMO CERTIFICATION

An interview with the director
responsible for the process



Mulgrave (NSW) based food manufacturer, Syndian Natural Food Products is only weeks away from achieving Non GM certification to the CERT ID global standard for their range of healthy meals and snacks. They are working with GMO-ID Australia to meet their certification objectives.

The bulletin editor recently interviewed the director of Syndian Natural Foods, Saher Dermelkonian, to learn a little more about this progressive Australian food manufacturer.

Saher, why and when was Syndian Natural Foods founded?

"I have always had a love for natural and healthy foods and enjoyed cooking for my family and friends using only fresh, non-processed ingredients. I would usually prepare and serve the meals on the same day. My friends, half- jokingly, were always suggesting that I produce my meals on a larger scale to share with people who required more natural foods. In 2000, I founded Syndian Natural Food Products".

How would you describe the products which you manufacture?

"We manufacture healthy meals made from natural ingredients with a focus on ease of preparation for our consumers. All of our products are gluten free, dairy free and vegan. Syndian does not use any additives, supplements, enhancers, emulsifiers, flavourings, binders, preservatives colouring or boosters. All our products are Kosher and Halal certified".

From where do you source your ingredients and raw materials?

"We have a strict policy of only using fresh and Australian grown produce and ingredients. Products must come from facilities that have similar accreditation to us. This is challenging at times but our suppliers always come through with our requirements. We have rarely had to make minor concessions when sourcing specific ingredients for a product that requires a particular natural flavour and which cannot be sourced within Australia such as tamari sauce".

What Food Safety Programmes have you implemented within your facility?

"HACCP, (HACCP in 2005)"

From some of your accreditations I can see that you supply some major retail outlets. Who else do you supply to?

"Beside Coles and Woolworths, we supply many independent retailers such as IGA stores, Green Grocers, Health food, organic and wholefood stores and many delicatessens

We also have a number of food service customers who use our

products to supply their customer base which demands natural products".

Why are you seeking Non GM certification?

"This is a fundamental issue for Syndian, as we always put our customers health and wellbeing first, as suggested in our company ethos. Since Syndian was founded we have always sought organic raw materials and ingredients, in the belief that the products were sourced from crops that were not genetically modified. This is also one of the reasons that we always attempt to only use Australian grown and processed products as there are less genetically modified crops grown in Australia compared with other countries.

We always request that our ingredients have been certified as being non- genetically modified. Many of our customers are asking for this assurance as the level of concern among the public is rising in regard to the health effect of the gm-foods."

Some of our clients have found Non GM Certification a little daunting. How have you and your team found the process?

"Because of our strict control on all of our ingredients and being a gluten free and a HACCP certified site, we were more than familiar with allergen control, segregation and Identity Preservation. Our biggest challenges revolve around some of our suppliers who now realise that a statement on a company letter head stating that a product is non-gm is not sufficient when working to such a robust standard as CERT ID Non-GM".

How have you found working with our auditors and Food Technologists from GMO ID Australia? Be honest Saher, I won't tell them what you think.

"I found that their 'hands- on' approach and overall knowledge of the food industry from farm to customer was impressive. During an inspection of our processing facility, I could see that the two guys (Terry and Martin) had a passion for food processing and the industry in general. They even suggested a number of things to assist with the process that had nothing to do with non gm accreditation".

Thanks Saher and all the best with the certification and your business plans. ■



For more information on Syndian
Natural foods - www.syndian.com.au

For more information on GMO-ID
Australia and the Cert-ID Non-GM
programme go to www.gmoid.com.au

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