



October 20, 2021

Mark L. Schiller
President and Chief Executive Officer
Hain Celestial Group, Inc.

Via E-mail

Dear Mr. Schiller,

Consumer Reports writes to urge you to suspend the manufacturing and sale of infant rice cereal due to continued high levels of inorganic arsenic in these products. This clearly has become a chronic issue, as evidenced by the test results outlined in a recent congressional report and the decision earlier this year by Beech-Nut Nutrition Company to discontinue the manufacture of baby rice cereals due to the arsenic issue.

Even low levels of inorganic arsenic can have adverse effects on cognitive development in young children. Given this, and given infant rice cereal is responsible for more than half of all exposure to inorganic arsenic in infants and toddlers, removing these products from the market would be the most effective approach in addressing this issue and providing assurances to parents and caregivers. The suspension of the manufacturing and sale of infant rice cereal should remain in effect until a more protective health standard for inorganic arsenic is implemented through updated regulations or voluntary measures.

Inorganic arsenic is considered to be the environmental substance with the most significant potential threat to human health, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry ([ATSDR](#)). It has been linked to a range of adverse health effects, including diabetes, high blood pressure and several types of cancer. Particularly troubling are studies showing damaging effects on the central nervous system and cognitive development in children.

A [study](#) of Maine schoolchildren found that inorganic arsenic levels in drinking water above 5 ppb “showed significant reductions in Full Scale IQ scores.” Another [study](#) found that for infants and toddlers, solid food was responsible for roughly three-quarters of exposure to inorganic arsenic with infant rice cereal being responsible for more than half (55 percent) of total exposure. Drinking water was responsible for roughly the same amount of exposure to inorganic arsenic as solid baby foods other than infant rice cereal (19 percent).

Rice is known to accumulate inorganic arsenic at a rate much higher than other grains. Although rice-based products make a significant portion of solid foods for infants and toddlers, other grains have been shown to have much lower levels of arsenic. [Testing](#) by Consumer Reports found that the grains amaranth, buckwheat, millet, and polenta or grits had negligible levels of inorganic arsenic. Bulgur, barley, and farro also have very little arsenic. Quinoa had average inorganic arsenic levels comparable to those of other alternative grains, and oats has been

identified as another option that is lower in inorganic arsenic. It is evident that removing infant rice cereal from a baby's diet would not limit the availability of other options.

As noted in the February 2021 [report](#) by the House Oversight Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, Hain Celestial Group -- through its Earth's Best Organic brand -- sold baby food products containing as much as 129 ppb inorganic arsenic. This is significantly higher than the finalized standard established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of 100 ppb.

Another disconcerting revelation from the report is that Hain typically only tested the ingredients that went into the baby food, but did not test finished products. Hain also established an internal standard of 200 ppb for arsenic, but disregarded this standard by using ingredients as high as 309 ppb arsenic, according to the report.

It is imperative that Hain Celestial Group follow the lead of Beech-Nut and suspend the manufacturing and sale of all infant rice cereals until a more protective health standard is in place. Hain also should commit to testing final products for inorganic arsenic, not just ingredients. In addition, Hain should have health protective standards for inorganic arsenic in all the baby food products they sell, not just infant rice cereal.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We request hearing back from you by Friday, November 5, 2021.

Sincerely,

/s/

Brian Ronholm
Director, Food Policy
Consumer Reports