

# PRESS RELEASE

**FDA/CSD/CPE/PRS/25/004**

## **Re: KNUST Study on Banned Substances in Tomato Paste**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ACCRA, February 28, 2025** - The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) has noted the article published on the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology's (KNUST) website, titled "Banned Substances Found in Tomato Paste in Ghana," which was subsequently reported by MyJoyOnline.com, CitiNewsroom.com, GNA and other news outlets.

The FDA is aware of this research, which was conducted in 2018. Findings from this research were presented as a poster during the FDA's 2023 maiden Scientific Forum in Accra. In 2018, the FDA developed a testing method for detecting synthetic food colors, including erythrosine in tomato paste and other food products.

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### **Regulatory Actions Taken**

In 2015, the Authority played a key role in ensuring that the Red Dye 3 (E127- synthetic color) was banned in tomato products in Ghana.

Although the research was conducted in 2018, it was published on the KNUST website in 2024, by which time the FDA had long investigated the implicated brands and taken necessary regulatory actions to ensure compliance.

These include:

- (i) Safe disposal of the implicated brands and bulk products from manufacturing premises;
- (ii) Safe disposal of food colours found at manufacturing premises;
- (iii) Application of administrative fines.

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It is important to clarify that in Ghana, the use of Red Dye 3 or erythrosine (E127) in foods is guided by the General Standard for Food Additive (GSFA 2024)/Codex Stan 192-1995 revised 2024 which is approved by the FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additive (JECFA). The Authority has since been monitoring these products for possible adulteration.

It is noteworthy to state that the research took samples of Tomato Mix and analysed them as Tomato Paste, leading to misinterpretations.

Tomato Mix products have historically been more susceptible to the addition of synthetic colors, dietary fiber, and sugar - additives that are not permitted in tomato paste.

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### **Regulatory Landscape**

In 2018, the FDA registered only three (3) Tomato Mix products and ten (10) Tomato Paste products. Currently, there are sixty-two (62) registered tomato mix products and forty (40) registered tomato paste products.

All these products comply with Ghana's standards and undergo rigorous evaluation and testing before approval.

### **Distinguishing Tomato Paste from Tomato Mix**

Tomato PASTE and Tomato MIX are two distinct products: both are legally recognized but differ significantly in composition:

- Tomato **PASTE** contains a minimum of 24% tomato concentrate with or without salt as per the Ghana

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Standard GS 246:2019.

- Tomato **MIX** contains a minimum of 7% tomato concentrate, tomato powder, water, salt, starch, dietary fiber, and optional ingredients such as sugars, flavors, NATURAL COLOURS, spices, vitamins, or minerals as per the Ghana Standard GS 1203:2018. Natural colors are permitted in tomato mix.

ERYTHROSINE IS NOT ALLOWED in tomato products. However, it is allowed by the GSFA for use in small quantities in candies, baked goods (cookies & cakes), frozen desserts, frostings, and beverages.

### **Current Labelling Requirements**

For the consumer to make a more informed choice, the FDA introduced labeling guidelines (FDA/RQT/FOR-08) in 2018

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(<https://fdaghana.gov.gh/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/GUIDELINES-FOR-THE-LABELLING-OF-TOMATO-MIX.pdf>).

- The name on the label should be clearly stated (whether Paste or Mix)
- All ingredients used in the product should be listed on the label

### **Ensuring Food Safety Compliance**

The FDA enforces strict regulatory measures on the importation, manufacture, and sale of tomato products through:

1. Pre-market Evaluation and Registration – All tomato products undergo laboratory testing and approval

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before being introduced to the market.

2. Routine Market Surveillance – The FDA conducts periodic inspections and spot checks to ensure continued compliance with safety standards.

3. Collaboration with Accredited Laboratories – The FDA partners with both local and international laboratories for comprehensive chemical and microbiological testing of food products.

### **Conclusion**

While public awareness of research findings is essential, the FDA encourages timely collaboration between its Research and Nutrition Department and researchers to ensure that safety concerns are addressed appropriately. The FDA remains committed to

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protecting public health and urges academic institutions to engage with the Authority when conducting research that has regulatory implications.

Through continued stakeholder engagement and public education, the FDA will uphold its mission of ensuring food safety and maintaining consumer confidence in food products on our market.

For all inquiries and concerns, please reach out to us through the contacts below.

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Signed  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
Food and Drugs Authority

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