

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

October 24, 2012

Bastiaan G. de Zeeuw  
President  
Carolina Rice  
Riviana Foods Inc.  
2777 Allen Parkway  
Houston, TX 77019-2141

Dear Mr. de Zeeuw:

Two separate studies released earlier this month from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Consumer Reports showed “worrisome” levels of inorganic arsenic, a known carcinogen, in popular brands of rice and rice products like rice cereal, breakfast cereal, and rice cakes. FDA identified arsenic in the vast majority of its samples of rice, rice cereal, rice beverages, and rice cakes.<sup>1</sup> Consumer Reports identified arsenic in rice, hot cereal, ready-to-eat cereal, rice cakes and crackers, rice pasta, rice flour, and rice syrup.<sup>2</sup>

While more thorough testing and analysis by FDA and EPA is presently underway, these findings do raise potential public health concerns. The Consumer Reports study found that people who ate one serving of rice daily “had arsenic levels that were 44 percent greater than those who had not.”<sup>3</sup>

There are two types of arsenic compounds: organic and inorganic. Inorganic arsenic was found in Carolina Whole Grain Brown rice, as well as other varieties. The inorganic form of arsenic is more toxic and can pose health risks for adults and children. Inorganic arsenic has been associated with long-term health risks including skin, bladder, and lung cancers.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *Arsenic in Rice* (Sept. 19, 2012) (available online at [www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FoodContaminantsAdulteration/Metals/ucm319870.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FoodContaminantsAdulteration/Metals/ucm319870.htm)).

<sup>2</sup> Consumer Reports, *Arsenic in your food* (Nov. 2012) (available online at [www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/11/arsenic-in-your-food/index.htm](http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/11/arsenic-in-your-food/index.htm)); U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *Arsenic in Rice* (Sept. 19, 2012) (available online at [www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FoodContaminantsAdulteration/Metals/ucm319870.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FoodContaminantsAdulteration/Metals/ucm319870.htm)).

<sup>3</sup> Consumer Reports, *Arsenic in your food* (Nov. 2012) (available online at [www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/11/arsenic-in-your-food/index.htm](http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2012/11/arsenic-in-your-food/index.htm)).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

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compound is also ranked by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a Group 1 carcinogen.”<sup>5</sup>

Because rice is a staple food product eaten by hundreds of millions of Americans, it is important to have accurate information about arsenic exposure and risks through rice and rice products. FDA is currently in the process of analyzing 1,000 more rice samples in order to understand the levels of arsenic exposure and the health risks that consumption of rice might pose. FDA says it does not yet have “an adequate scientific basis to recommend changes by consumers regarding their consumption of rice and rice products” until a more thorough review of the data is completed.<sup>6</sup>

We are writing to learn what you know about the levels of arsenic in your foods and the health risks associated with such levels. We ask that you please provide the following information and documents no later than November 8, 2012:

1. All documents referring to testing for arsenic in any Carolina Rice products, including detailed test results conducted by or for Carolina Rice.
2. All documents relating to any assessments of the health risks posed by arsenic in food products conducted by or for Carolina Rice, including any health risk assessments created by your company, any internal and external communications regarding those health risk assessments, and any assessments of health risks to highly exposed subpopulations such as infants, children, and individuals with celiac disease.
3. All policies and procedures describing whether and how Carolina Rice monitors and limits the amount of arsenic in its products.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and  
Investigations

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Toxicology Program, *12<sup>th</sup> Report on Carcinogens* (June 10, 2011) (available online at [ntp.niehs.nih.gov/?objectid=035E57E7-BDD9-2D9B-AFB9D1CAD8D09C1](http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/?objectid=035E57E7-BDD9-2D9B-AFB9D1CAD8D09C1)).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *FDA Releases Preliminary Data on Arsenic Levels in Rice and Rice Products* (Sept. 19, 2012) (available online at [www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm319972.htm](http://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm319972.htm)).