

## **Ozone Gets OK For Use in U.S. Food Industry.**

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Palo Alto, CA - Ozone, one of the most effective disinfectants used in food processing in other countries, has received "Generally Recognized As Safe" (GRAS) status in the United States from a panel of experts in the food science, ozone technology, and other related fields.

The Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) requested an independent contractor to review the history and health aspects of ozone for possible use in processing foods for human consumption and for GRAS status. After an initial meeting with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which allows independent affirmation of GRAS status of substances by a qualified panel of experts, six scientists met frequently over the course of a year to interpret and evaluate the history of ozone. The panel determined, when generated artificially and applied under controlled conditions, ozone can solve a number of environmental problems, such as being a sanitizer or disinfectant for food. The panel's findings include the following:

Ozone is a more powerful disinfectant than chlorine. (The most commonly used disinfectant.)

Ozone has been used safely and effectively in water treatment for nine decades and has been approved in the U.S. as "GRAS" for treatment of bottled water since 1982.

Ozone has been applied in the food industry in Europe for decades and, in some cases, for almost a century.

Ozone does not remain in water, so there are no safety concerns about consumption.

No further action is needed, and ozone can now be implemented in the \$430 billion dollar food industry, where potential applications include increasing the yield of certain crops, protecting raw agricultural commodities during storage and transit, sanitizing packaging materials used for storage, or added to water to wash food.

"Ozone is very efficient in killing pathogens and spoilage organisms, and its use by the food industry will be welcomed as another tool to ensure the production of safe and wholesome foods," said Jeff Barach, vice-president of research and food science policy at the National Food Processors Association.

"Ozone is one of the most powerful disinfectants known. There are no toxic byproducts or potential health hazards when properly used as a microbicide," said Myron Jones, EPRI Food Technology Center Manager. (Microbial contaminants include salmonella and giardia.)

"There are scores of other possible applications of ozone to explore," said Jones, "Basically, any application that calls for purification or oxidation can potentially benefit from ozone."

"While populations increase throughout the world, we are seeing an evolution of new microbiological strains involved in human illnesses. Ozone will help to keep people healthy," said Clark Gellings, EPRI's Customer Systems Group Vice-President.

Ozone's health and environmental benefits are working to secure it a place in a wide variety of other markets. Today, more than 200 U.S. drinking water plants use ozone, and the number is expected to climb rapidly.

The EPRI, established in 1973 and headquarters in Palo Alto, CA, manages science and technology R & D for the electricity industry. More than 700 utilities are members of the Institute which has an annual budget of some \$500 million.