



## Rumor about Oreo biscuits

Greetings from the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA).

With reference to the news circulating on social media about a biscuit product of Oreo brand, manufactured by the American company Mondelez International, the published claim that Oreo biscuits contain a percentage of alcohol, ethyl alcohol (ethanol) and that it contains some lard (Pig fat) derivatives, and accordingly, the Oreo biscuit product was considered a non-halal product, this claim is widespread as no substantiated evidence proves the same.

Regarding the first claim that Oreo biscuit product contains a percentage of alcohol, there are many food products that contain small percentages of ethanol, resulting from natural fermentation that occurs during the processing steps. This is normal as the standard (UAE.S GSO 2538:2021 for Maximum limits For Residues of Ethyl Alcohol (Ethanol) in food products, controls these percentages.

ADAFSA has verified that these products comply with the limits, ratios and controls contained in this Standard.

The scope of application of the above Standard indicates that it is related to the maximum limits residues of ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in food resulting from natural fermentation in food (or used as a flavor solvent) and is accepted for considering food free of ethyl alcohol (ethanol). Moreover, this Standard strictly prohibits the addition of liquor, alcoholic products and ethyl alcohol (ethanol) to food during all steps of processing and handling.

The above Standard indicates that determining certain percentages of the presence of ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in food is not related to the safety or quality of the product itself, but rather to the requirements of Islamic Sharia Laws (Halal). The approval of the official Gulf Sharia authorities was obtained prior to the issue of this Standard.

The above Standard specifies the upper limits that must not be exceeded by ethyl alcohol (ethanol) resulting from natural fermentation in many food products, as what is stated in the Standard is relied upon as a criterion for accepting or rejecting those food products, including biscuit products.

Ethanol is not usually considered as ingredient of and is not added to biscuit, which applies to the above-mentioned product, but these products may contain very small proportions of ethanol because of natural fermentation during processing. This is considered normal and ADAFSA verifies that these percentages do not exceed the limits referred to in the above Standard.



As for the second above claim that Oreo biscuits contain (lard) which renders this product (Oreo biscuit) non-Halal. This is again widespread claim that is linked unsubstantially and with no valid evidence as follows:

The ingredients of biscuits vary in general, including Oreo biscuits, as they include flour, sugar, starch, cacao, corn syrup, fermentation agents, salt, oils or fats and emulsifiers (such as lecithin). It may also include other food additives, colors, flavoring materials...etc.

Some of the above ingredients such as lecithin (like gelatin and other ingredients) can be extracted from plant or animal sources, as such, lecithin being extracted from animal sources does not mean exclusively that they are extracted from pig.

It is not permissible to generalize and widespread claim that the presence of these ingredients in food products means that they are extracted from pig. ADAFSA verifies the sources of the ingredients of food products and does not allow the presence of any non-halal ingredients in those products, except in the case of products that are indicated on the food label as containing non-halal products or ingredients, where such products may not be displayed, and sold solely in places designated for the sale of non-halal products (non halal area). ADAFSA also takes samples of these products and tests them in food laboratories to verify the sources of the used animal ingredients.

ADAFSA implements several control systems and programs that include testing representative samples of all food product consignments imported into the Emirate's markets and verifying their suitability for human consumption before trading them in the markets. It further conducts periodic tests of food products on sale in the Emirate's markets to verify their validity and suitability for human consumption and to verify the ingredients and their sources. Such food consignments are not released and allowed to be traded in the Abu Dhabi markets unless it has been ensured that they are safe, comply with all the necessary requirements, and do not contain unauthorized ingredients or sourced from unauthorized sources. They must also conform to the relevant UAE standards and technical regulations.

ADAFSA verifies the health and safety of all food products in the Emirate's markets, whether imported or local, before allowing their trading in the local markets. ADAFSA further implements a set of programs and activities to achieve this goal, including monitoring programs, laboratory testing, inspection activities, notification systems, follow-up of complaints and monitoring any local, regional or global new emerging issues.

ADAFSA confirms that all Oreo biscuit consignments are inspected and their attached documents checked.

ADAFSA is keen to monitor news published about the conformity, suitability, health and safety of various food and agricultural inputs and products around the world, and then "after checking



the validity of these news", it takes immediate preventive measures. It also takes corrective measures in case of detecting the presence of inappropriate, non-conforming, unfit products for human consumption, non-halal products or unauthorized ingredients, as they are seized and withdrawn from the markets and the necessary measures are taken to prevent their recurrence in the market.

ADAFSA has several communication channels with the public (by various means) to receive remarks, complaints or inquiries related to any agricultural or food ingredient or product. It also responds immediately with a statement clarifying the reality of the situation and provides advice and guidance after scrutinizing the issue at hand.