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## **COTTONSEED OIL A KEY INGREDIENT IN GROWING KOSHER FOOD MARKET**

*More non-Jewish consumers are choosing Kosher for perceived health, quality benefits*

**CORDOVA, Tenn. – (March 11, 2008)** – Long deemed a kosher vegetable oil by the Jewish community, cottonseed oil will play an increasing role in helping food manufacturers deliver kosher foods to an even wider audience, experts say.

“It has been estimated that more than 40 percent of the retail foodstuffs sold nationally in the United States enjoys a kosher certification,” says Rabbi Zushe Blech, the author of *Kosher Food Production* and administrator of EarthKosher Kosher Certification Services. “This figure continues to grow, aided by the ready availability of kosher raw materials, such as kosher cottonseed oil.”

Menachem Lubinsky, president of Lubicom Marketing Consulting, and editor-in-chief of *KosherToday.com*, a trade publication for the kosher food industry, notes that kosher-certified products are becoming increasingly popular with the mainstream consumer. “Kosher represents quality and safety,” he says. “More than 11 million consumers buy kosher products in the United States, and that number is growing annually by 15 percent.”

Rabbi Blech notes that cottonseed oil offers several direct advantages in the kosher market. “First, it is a domestic oil, and is not subject to the potential significant kosher issues relating to the shipment of tropical oils that also may transport animal fats,” he says. “Second, most opinions approve its use for Passover, a status not enjoyed by soy, corn, and canola oils.”

Cottonseed oil contains no animal byproducts and originates from the cotton seed rather than one of the five grains that are forbidden during Passover (oats, wheat, barley, rye and spelt).

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According to Ben Morgan, executive director of the National Cottonseed Products Association, Cordova, Tenn, "We're seeing an increased interest in cottonseed oil not only as a kosher food, but as a healthy, *trans*-free ingredient for food manufacturing and the foodservice industry. Because of its natural stability, cottonseed oil does not require hydrogenation – the process that produces artificial *trans* fats."

To earn official kosher certification, explains Scott Middleton of Delta Oil Mill in Jonestown, Miss., many cottonseed oil mills are supervised by rabbis affiliated with a certification organization like the Orthodox Union, the largest and most well known of the nearly 900 agencies and individuals certifying kosher products.

"A rabbi tours our facility and carefully checks the storage tanks to be sure no outside materials have come in contact with the oil manufacturing process," he says.

Adds John Fricke of Planters Cottonseed Mill in Pine Bluff, Ark., which produces 100 million pounds of cottonseed oil each year, says most oil mills turning out kosher oil, do so exclusively. "Kosher consumers want kosher oil, and non-Kosher consumers are reassured with the safety and quality of the oil that is kosher," he said. "It's a win-win."

**About the National Cottonseed Products Association**

NCPA is the national trade association for the cottonseed processing industry. In addition to the U.S. cottonseed crushing industry, association membership includes refiners, who process cottonseed oil into semi-finished and finished products, dealers and brokers who market cottonseed products, and other firms that provide goods and services to the industry.

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