

Kombucha Brewers International

LGO Committee Minutes

7/18/14

Committee Co-Heads: Kate Zuckerman and Eric Plantenberg

Committee Secretary: Mike Beshore

Location & Time: Tele-conference: 7/18/14, 8-9am PST

Attending Members: Kate Zuckerman, Eric Plantenberg, Kim Lanski, Mike Beshore.

Mission: The purpose of this committee meeting is to discuss HACCP plan and best practices.

8:00 Meeting begins

8:08 Roll call

Kate: Any updates from the Board?

Kim, Mike: No.

8:10 Kate: Let's look at labeling as it is the last piece of best practices that wasn't look at last meeting. Any thoughts on "to accurately represent your product"?

Mike: Dan is trying to join.

Eric: I'll try to patch him in. (This didn't work)

Kate: Sounds like we are in agreement. Any thoughts on "to be in compliance with federal law regarding the word organic"? Sounds like we are in agreement. Any thoughts on "avoid making unfounded health claims"? Any other thoughts on labeling that we would like to see addressed?

Eric: What do we do when labels are flat out false?

Kim: I would like some guidelines that are distributed to kombucha companies so people don't make those mistakes. I think people in general are not trying to make outrageous claims.

Eric: I'm picturing almost a marketing piece from KBI that would look professional and thoughtful.

Mike: Are there any thoughts on a third party verification for nutrition facts?

Kate: I could see a company that's starting off wouldn't want to invest this capital in this kind of testing. The 10,000 unit threshold won't be met by many companies.

8:20 Kim: Sugar testing would need to be "off the shelf" testing. Anyone can send anything away for testing.

Kate: Hopefully these cases will be at a minimum and can be dealt with on case by case basis.

Kate: We were looking at different methods of testing, gas chromatography has been found

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Kim: I've seen some comments that the Anton Par method is inaccurate; I've found it to be very accurate. This is an instrument that government agencies use. You have to use it right and clean it carefully.

Kate: Our experience is that gas chromatography is the most accurate and we work with a TTB certified facility. What do we think of "companies testing the product at a point when it is ready for market and a minimum of twice per year companies should be testing their product on the shelf for alcohol content."

Kim: I think this is a good protocol, but will be hard to enforce. I don't believe many companies are not in compliance with the <.5% and the ones that are over 2% could cause issues in the future. We should try to keep all product close to 1%, because it is very tough to keep product below .5%.

Eric: How do we know that all tests are being accurate? With the same batch, one lab comes in at .23% and another comes in at 1.2%. I don't think our brewing process creates such an unstable product for this to all be accurate.

Kim: Testing product with this low of alcohol levels may be very difficult. I would prefer that we never get to the point of Govt agencies testing our product off the shelf.

Eric: I think we need to be very proactive in finding TTB certified, quality testing labs and sharing that with the public. Telling the public that we are testing our kombucha, and it is coming in below .5%, and that it is a unique product. Explaining that if someone takes product and has it kept not refrigerated that it won't be intoxicating or won't be harmed.

Kim: That makes sense, but in practice with Govt agencies it doesn't matter. There were maybe 8 kombucha companies in the country when we started and when we discussed alcohol it was apparent that it would be very alarming to the public, mothers with children etc., if it came out that our product was above .5% ABV.

Eric: I would question that "a lot" of kombucha brands that are on the shelf are over that .5%. Maybe I'm off base.

Kim: We've tested a lot at a couple different labs. Kombuchas that are over 2% you can taste the alcohol. Maybe this shouldn't be worried about, but I do know that if the controversy happens again and we get tested then everyone will want to distance themselves from kombucha. We signed some papers with people like Wholefoods and UNFI saying we were liable and they seemed to back off. However, I firmly believe that our kombucha is over .5%, pretty much, unless you increase the bacteria level, dilute, force carbonate and keep it cold. But it won't happen instantly; the kombucha needs to get to room temp for a day or two.

Kate: We haven't tested any product besides ours. I do share your concern that the impact of a bad actor can have on the industry. It would be tough for all of us if we had a repeat from a few years ago. As an organization (KBI) if we align ourselves with the Gov standard of <.5%, this would be the best practice for all. Then if it is found that there is a bad actor, we can deal with this on a case by case basis.

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Kim: That's what happen last time, everyone put out news flashes stating that their kombucha was <.5% when it left their facility. They then came up with the law that we cannot rely on the distributors. But in truth, the kombuchas were at the higher alcohol levels when it left the facility. I don't want to be the whistle blower on anyone, but some if you use a secondary fermentation to carbonate your product, it will be over .5%.

Eric: Did you test the kombucha we sent you?

Kim: Yes. Some came back above 2%, others were in the 1% range. However this product was shipped at room temperature. I used the Anton Paar.

Eric: As a general rule, I personally disregard those results because of the testing method. Here is the real life example, we send you a product that we know is below .5%, and ship it unrefrigerated, which is something we would never do to a customer, and it gets to you and is tested above 2% with an Anton Par. We need to find what the truth is about testing and alcohol levels. Three different methods bring back three different results, 2 are wrong.

Kate: We have done some collaborative work with beer breweries, and what we've learned is the methods that are used for testing beer are not accurate for testing product with low-low alcohol levels.

Kim: I totally agree that it is very tricky testing alcohol that is that low. That may be the problem. I'm hopeful that this won't be a problem. Dr Pepper and other beverages will have some level of alcohol.

Kate: It seems like a safe thing to say as an organization (KBI) to be in compliance with Gov Laws. This will give KBI recourse if someone is selling 3% kombucha and knows it. Do we agree that the language is good to be reviewed by the board?

Kim: Yes.

Eric: Love it.

Kate: Great. What are the committee's thoughts on the language surrounding compliance with health regulations in your state, and federal level? Just using things that are already in existence and pointing people. (All agree) Moving down to pH. Are there any thoughts on this language?

Kim: More detail may be important. I think it's great. We should make it as easy as possible for new comers to join and be in compliance.

Kate: That's a great idea. Maybe we can provide resources regarding regulations and guidelines.

Kate: And then shelf life, pretty straight forward there. Any other thoughts on the Business Practices section of Best Practices? (Business license, general liability etc.) Are we good for review by the board?

Eric: Yes.

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Kim: Yes.

8:50 Meeting adjourned

Top 3 Ideas Ranked

1.

Next Steps

- Doodle invite will go out to determine next meeting date and time.
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Committee Contact List:

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Follow-ups post-committee mtg.: