

NAVBJA

Vanilla is the world's most popular flavor. Most of the world's supply of vanilla beans is produced by tens of thousands of small, mostly family-run farms. In fact, one of the world's most impoverished countries, Madagascar, supplies the vast majority of the beans that are used throughout the world. It is no surprise then that the farming of vanilla beans is especially critical to the people of Madagascar and its economy.

The North American Vanilla Bean Importers Association (NAVBJA) was formed out of necessity in 2010 by a group of concerned vanilla dealers and importers. Our primary mandate is to protect the authenticity and brand of the vanilla bean within the flavor and fragrance industry. Despite the Federal Regulations that are in place to do just that, misrepresentation and abuse of the vanilla brand and image are rampant within the industry today.

As just one example, we estimate that over one billion pounds of ice cream sold in the US each year is mislabeled according to the Federal Regulations currently in place. While the consumer is being duped, vanilla farmers in Madagascar, Uganda and other origins are struggling to feed their families.

This despite the very clear Federal Regulations stating that the characterizing flavor of Category 1 vanilla ice cream must originate from the vanilla bean. When it comes to Vanilla ice cream that is labeled "Pure Vanilla" or "Natural Vanilla" ice cream there is no other alternative. Despite this clarity, many manufacturers have been tempted to replace natural flavors originating from the vanilla bean



vanilla orchid flower

Photos courtesy of Hank Kaestner and Douglas Daugherty



hand pollination



vanilla farmer with beans



cured vanilla beans

with natural substitutes. Many, such as Natural Vanillins, are incorrectly being perceived as acceptable simply because they are natural. Nevertheless, this is still a direct violation of Federal Regulations.

Furthermore, it is a deception for the consumer, who is bombarded with words like "Pure" and "Natural" sometimes alongside images of vanilla flowers and vanilla beans by manufacturers vying for brand loyalty. The reality is that many of these advertised natural vanilla products are not flavored using the vanilla beans in accordance with the Federal Regulations. Over the years, as the popularity of naturally flavored vanilla

products has soared, we have actually seen a drop in the consumption of vanilla beans at the industrial level. How can this be?

NAVBJA is a nonprofit organization and our mandate continues to be defined as we evolve within the food industry. Stopping further erosion of the usage of vanilla beans by making the industry aware of their regulatory obligations when sourcing their flavor requirements is just one of our goals. Consumer awareness programs, product testing and verifications, the promotion of the usage of vanilla beans and the protection of the vanilla brand and image are other key objectives.