

Drug Status Report

Drug: Gutka

Drug Name Status: Gutka is the common name.

Ingredients: Betel nut, tobacco, catechu, lime and flavourings^{1,2}.

Betel nut is the fruit of the areca palm (*Areca catechu*). PRAD of OCS has a substance of concern file on betel nuts³.

This note⁴ from Wikipedia explains the origins of the name and the subsequent confusion pertaining to the nature of the “betel nut”.

“In English, the areca nut is also widely known as Betel nut (or "Betelnut"), because it is mostly chewed along with Betel, the leaf of a vine belonging to the Piperaceae family. The term "Betel nut" is technically incorrect, for the betel vine produces no nuts, and this inaccurate term creates quite a bit of confusion regarding the discernment between the nut and the leaf. Generally, "paan" is used to refer to the betel leaf. However, the common use of the word "paan" refers mostly to the chewing mixture, including areca nut, wrapped in the leaves.”

The muddling between the areca nut and the betel leaf, by calling the nut "betel nut", is restricted to the languages of the colonizing powers, like English, French, Dutch, Portuguese and German. This lack of accuracy is likely a legacy of the colonial era in which chewing the mixture was restricted to "the natives". In the languages of the places where the Areca nut is traditionally chewed there is a clear and separate term for the areca nut and another for the betel leaf.”

International status:

US: Areca nut is not listed on the schedules to the CSA and is not mentioned on the DEA website.

United Nations: Areca nut is not listed on the Yellow List - List of Narcotic Drugs under International Control nor the Green List - List of Psychotropic Substances under International

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gutka>

²

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=health&res=9907E0DB113AF930A2575BC0A9649C8B63>

³ Email: Jocelyn Kula to Ken Moore, 2008-09-2.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Areca_nut

Control.

Canadian Status: Areca nut is not considered to be controlled by the CDSA³.

Recommendation: Gutka is not included in the schedules to the CDSA and is not a controlled substance.

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