

**Press Release**  
**For immediate release**

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2010**



### **ANH and IAHS keep European Parliament petition on vitamin max levels open**



Yesterday the European Parliament's Petitions Committee agreed to keep five petitions, questioning the European Commission's proposal to limit maximum levels of vitamins and minerals across Europe's 27 member states, open. The proposal represents the next phase of the EU's Food Supplements Directive (EC Directive 2002/46/EC).

The case supporting the petitions was argued by Dr Robert Verkerk, executive director of the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) and also scientific advisor to the Irish Association of Health Stores (IAHS). The petitions had been filed 2 years ago by the Irish Association of Health Stores, the ANH, the Irish Health Trade Association, the Nutritional Therapists of Ireland and a Swedish association of practitioners.

Dr Verkerk told the Committee and attending Members of the European Parliament, as well as other observers present, that over 100 million Europeans took supplements regularly and they should be allowed the freedom to choose. He said the Commission's desire to statutorily limit dosages of vitamin and mineral food supplements using its flawed risk analysis methods, would mean that, assuming the existing proposals were turned to law, the vast majority of people would not experience any significant benefits when using the products.

Dr Verkerk, referring to arguments published by him recently in two articles in the highly respected peer review journal *Toxicology*, was highly critical of methods developed by both the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Commission. Dr Verkerk commenced his briefing to the Committee comparing the lack of consistency in EFSA's risk assessment methods that, on one hand, were generally 'green lighting' as safe genetically modified crops, while delivering highly restrictive assessments on many vitamins and minerals, the intake of which had been associated with profound beneficial health effects.

Following the Petition Committee's meeting in Brussels yesterday, Dr Verkerk commented, "*I thought the European Commission put up a rather weak defence. Its key strategy seemed to be to attack the entire notion of nutritional therapy, arguing it involved the medicinal, rather than food use, of micronutrients*". Verkerk went on to say, "*the Commission continues to ignore key issues we are raising about the irrational and inconsistent scientific and regulatory approaches they are contemplating*".

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Mr Basil Mathioudakis, head of the food law and nutrition unit of DG SANCO, who argued the European Commission's case, told the Committee it was committed to turning the proposals into law and was content to outlaw use of nutrients used in clinical nutrition, functional medicine and nutritional therapy. He remarked that any use of vitamins and minerals to prevent or treat disease was outside the scope of food law, and so shouldn't be allowed under the EU's Food Supplements Directive.

Mrs Jill Bell, chair of IAHS, the only other petitioner attending, told the Petitions Committee that she was confused by the Commission's complaint over her association's impact assessment. The IAHS's own assessments suggested that a proposal to severely limit dosages would not only negatively impact numerous consumers who were reliant on the products, it would also send a significant number of health stores to the wall.

Ms Erminia Mazzoni, chair of the Committee, concluded, following a short discussion involving MEPs, Dr Verkerk and Mrs Jill Bell, that the petition be kept open. She also agreed that the Committee request again an opinion from the European Parliament's Committee on Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI).

Dr Verkerk proposed that Europe's risk assessor of foods, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Commission, the risk manager, be requested to answer the scientific complaints raised by Dr Verkerk and others in two peer reviewed papers in the journal *Toxicology* that are currently in press.

ENDS.

## **CONTACT**

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## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

### **About the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions**

[www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)

Any citizen, acting individually or jointly with others, may at any time exercise his right of petition to the European Parliament under Article 194 of the EC Treaty. Petitions will be considered by the committee to allow scrutiny on law-making processes involving the European Commission and European Council. This scrutiny can lead to constructive pressure being brought to bear on European institutions and Member State governments.

Any citizen of the European Union, or resident in a Member State, may individually or in association with others, submit a petition to the European Parliament on a subject which comes within the European Union's fields of activity and which affects them directly. Any company, organisation or

association with its headquarters in the European Union may also exercise this right of petition, which is guaranteed by the Treaty.

### **About ANH International**

[www.anhinternational.org](http://www.anhinternational.org)

[www.anh-europe.org](http://www.anh-europe.org)

Alliance for Natural Health International is an internationally active non-governmental organisation working towards protecting and promoting natural approaches to healthcare. ANH-Intl campaigns across a wide range of fields, including freedom of choice and the use of micronutrients and herbal products in healthcare. It also operates campaigns that aim to restrict mass fluoridation of water supplies and the use of genetically modified foods. Through its work particularly in Europe ([www.anh-europe.org](http://www.anh-europe.org)) and the USA ([www.anh-usa.org](http://www.anh-usa.org)), the ANH works to accomplish its mission through its unique application of 'good science' and 'good law'. The organisation was founded in 2002 by Dr Robert Verkerk, an internationally acclaimed expert in sustainability, who has headed the organisation since this time. The ANH brought a case against the European directive on food supplements in 2003, which was successfully referred to the European Court of Justice in early 2004. The ruling in 2005 provided significant clarification to areas of EU law affecting food supplements that were previously non-transparent.

### **About the Irish Association of Health Stores**

[www.irishhealthstores.com](http://www.irishhealthstores.com)

The IAHS is a professional trade association, which represents over 80% of the health stores in the Republic of Ireland. Health food is the fastest growing sector of food retailing in Ireland, and representing over 100 member stores, the IAHS exists to ensure that health food retailing is ethical, responsible, truthful and professional. Founded in 1986, the Association operates under a written constitution and member stores are required to adhere to a strict Code of Ethics.

### **About the European Commission's proposal**

Link to position on Maximum Permitted Levels (MPLs):

[http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630 ANH-Briefing-Paper FSD-MPLs.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630_ANH-Briefing-Paper_FSD-MPLs.pdf)

Link to European Commission's response to ANH and other petitions on MPLs:

[http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/090707 EC response to MPL petitions.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/090707_EC_response_to_MPL_petitions.pdf)

### **About the *Toxicology* papers**

Verkerk, R.H.J., Hickey, S., A critique of prevailing approaches to nutrient risk analysis pertaining to food supplements with specific reference to the European Union. *Toxicology* (2009), doi:10.1016/j.tox.2009.12.017

The article can be accessed electronically from:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tox.2009.12.017>

Verkerk, R.H.J., The paradox of overlapping micronutrient risks and benefits obligates risk/benefit analysis. *Toxicology* (2010), doi:10.1016/j.tox.2010.02.011

The article can be accessed electronically from:

[http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=ArticleURL&\\_udi=B6TCN-4YG1M2X-1&\\_user=5551568&\\_coverDate=02%2F24%2F2010&\\_rdoc=1&\\_fmt=high&\\_orig=search&\\_sort=d&\\_docanchor=&\\_view=c&\\_acct=C000050221&\\_version=1&\\_urlVersion=0&\\_userid=5551568&\\_md5=e3b5d82bb4edd48a7ed68fd99ca809e3](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6TCN-4YG1M2X-1&_user=5551568&_coverDate=02%2F24%2F2010&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&_view=c&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=5551568&_md5=e3b5d82bb4edd48a7ed68fd99ca809e3)