

ANH-Intl Press Release: MEPs object to health claims list Veto becomes a possibility as campaigning moves to the next stage

By lodging an official objection to a proposed list of 220 health claims for foods and food ingredients, MEPs on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee have opened the way to a veto of the proposal.

According to non-governmental organisation, the Alliance for Natural Health International (ANH-Intl), campaigning can now move to the next stage. *“This is wonderful news for our thousands of supporters who have contacted their MEPs over the issue of the health claims list,”* said ANH-Intl Executive & Scientific Director, Robert Verkerk PhD. *“But this is only Stage One of the veto campaign. Stage Two involves votes by the ENVI Committee and the entire European Parliament, so we need more of everything: more letters, more emails – in fact, more communications of all sorts! We must let MEPs know that the public doesn’t want the health claims list to become law.”*

A prime concern in the ongoing veto campaign is to address the perception – held by many MEPs – that the best course of action should be to cement the list in European Union (EU) law, so that there is ‘something to work with’. *“It’s true that more health claims can be added to the approved list after it becomes law,”* agreed Dr Verkerk. *“Unfortunately, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) demands multiple clinical trials, in healthy human subjects, before it will approve health claims. Only the largest corporations can afford the cost, and because consumers will be drawn to products with authorised claims, these will be seen largely on processed offerings from Big Food that are often inferior to those products produced by specialist health food manufacturers. The proposed regime will leave a lot of the healthiest foods and food ingredients without claims, which will be a great disservice to the public and to disease prevention through dietary means.”*

Neither is it true that the rejected claims – of which there are over 2,500 – are of little relevance to the general public, ANH-Intl emphasizes. According to Dr Verkerk, *“Even for more obscure substances – such as beta-glucans found in oats and barley – the sudden absence of a health claim for the ingredient’s role in supporting the immune system will unnecessarily confuse consumers. Many purchasers of healthy foods or products do so because they have heard that the product is healthy for some reason, but they don’t know exactly why. Health claims remind consumers of the reason they looked for the product in the first place.”*

“It’s also crucial to recognise that most of the rejected health claims actually have plenty of scientific and clinical evidence backing them up. It’s just not the very specific type of evidence that EFSA is demanding.”

ENDS

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NOTES FOR THE EDITOR

MEP health claims veto campaign pack, download at:

http://www.anh-europe.org/sites/default/files/120130-MEP-NHCR-campaign-pack_Engl.pdf

EU citizen health claims campaign pack, download at:

http://www.anh-europe.org/sites/default/files/120131-EU-citizen-NHCR-campaign-pack_Engl.pdf

ANH Europe health claims veto campaign page:

English language: <http://www.anh-europe.org/health-claims-veto-2012>

French language: <http://www.anh-europe.org/health-claims-veto-2012/fr>

German language: <http://www.anh-europe.org/health-claims-veto-2012/de>

ANH-Intl selected list of EFSA rejected health claims, including reasons for EFSA rejection and known health benefits:

http://www.anh-europe.org/files/111020_NHCR_Art_13_1_negative_claims_list.pdf

Alliance for Natural Health International is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to protecting and promoting natural and sustainable healthcare using the tools of 'good science' and 'good law'. It is an international alliance of consumers, practitioners, doctors, scientists and lawyers, as well as specialist natural health enterprises, all with a common goal of optimising human health using, as far as possible, approaches that are compatible with human physiology and our genetic backgrounds. The World Health Organization, and other leading health authorities, have confirmed that the major burdens on healthcare systems the world over are now caused by largely preventable, chronic diseases. Since prevention of these diseases needs to be mediated largely through dietary and lifestyle changes, the EU's Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation, and in particular its power to authorise and ban health claims, is of vital significance to European citizens' ability to make informed choices over the foods and ingredients consumed.

ANH-Intl was established by sustainability scientist, Robert Verkerk PhD, in 2002, and Dr Verkerk remains its executive and scientific director.