

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
15 March 2012



Final push to help European Parliament block European Commission health claims proposal

ANH-Intl issues position paper that lays out problems and solutions

One of the most controversial pieces of legislation ever considered by the European Parliament risks being ‘green-lighted’ simply because Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) want to see the back of it, says the Alliance for Natural Health International (ANH-Intl), a campaign group acting on behalf of natural health interests Europe-wide.

In order to make clear the problems, many of which have been corroborated by leading MEPs, ANH-Intl has today released a position paper to all MEPs. The European Parliament’s Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) is set to consider a formal objection prepared by UK MEP Chris Davies (Liberal Democrat/ALDE) and Finnish MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen (Christian Democrat/EPP) on 21st March. If the objection is carried by the Committee, a resolution containing the objection will be voted on by the entire European Parliament at the end of the month.

Commenting on the situation, Robert Verkerk PhD, executive and scientific director of ANH-Intl said, *“MEPs such as Marian Harkin have expressed clearly that the health claims Regulation won’t have the effects originally intended when the Parliament first approved the Regulation back in 2006. It has been taken off-course by a range of interests, and the complexities of trying to apply a one-size-fits-all scientific approach to the complex, changing and inevitably incomplete science of nutrition.”*

“We have clearly set out the problems—as well as the solutions—in our position paper, released today”, continued Verkerk. “We believe it would be deeply irresponsible of MEPs to vote through the proposed list of permitted claims under the assumption that the problems can be fixed after the list has been implemented. The passage of the list will make all unauthorised general claims illegal within 6 months. The histories of both the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority tells us that neither are at all likely to change their approach. If MEPs want to create a fair and proportionate Regulation, as originally intended, they have no alternative but to support the objection and a veto of the proposed list.”

Lobbying of MEPs and advocacy by ANH-Intl over the last few weeks has revealed that a growing number of MEPs are alive to the problems associated with the Regulation and its implementation. However, many have become frustrated with the fact that the authorised list of general function claims has not yet been passed and that the Regulation continues to draw controversy.

Adam Smith, science and communications officer for ANH-Intl who has been at the forefront of ANH-Intl’s lobbying efforts in Brussels, indicated, *“Most MEPs with whom we’ve spoken seem to understand that there are a rash of problems with the Regulation, and in particular over EFSA’s methods of assessment of health claims. But they now seem to be fed up with it and many seem to want to push it through, saying that it can be fixed once the highly deficient preliminary list of permitted health claims has been signed off by the Parliament.”*

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We feel they would be doing their constituencies a disservice if they just rubber-stamp such a problematic piece of European law in its current form. More appropriate implementation of the Regulation would have great potential to help deal with the major underlying health problems in European society, which are linked to inappropriate diets and nutrient intake.”

Ends.

CONTACT

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

MEP Position Paper, 15th March 2012:

http://anh-europe.org/sites/default/files/120315_ANH_NHCR_short_position_paper_March_2012.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

About Alliance for Natural Health International

www.anhinternational.org

www.facebook.com/ANHInternational

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 founded by sustainability scientist, Robert Verkerk PhD, in 2002, and Dr Verkerk remains its executive and scientific director.

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