

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release
22 March 2012



European Parliament committee betrays consumers over health claims

Yesterday morning, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) voted 37 to 22 not to support an objection that would have blocked the passage into European Union (EU) law of a 222-strong 'Community list' of approved health claims on foods and food ingredients. This result was achieved following intense lobbying by various industry groups and consumer organisations, with ANH-Intl representing the main group that has been consistently opposed to supporting passage of the list into EU law. The result of this vote has now closed the door on the most important and influential mechanism that could have forced a major rethink of the framework legislation itself.

Commenting on the vote, ANH-Intl executive and scientific director, Dr Robert Verkerk PhD, said, *"The push from Big Food, headed by FoodDrinkEurope, was just too strong. But the fact that nearly 40% of the committee voted in favour of a veto reflects the concerns that many MEPs have over the Regulation."*

Verkerk continued, *"All members of the public and ANH supporters who made their views known to their MEPs should be congratulated. They should also rest assured that we will persist in doing whatever we can to ensure the best possible outcome for one of the most poorly conceived pieces of European food law ever bestowed on the people of Europe."*

Supporting the passage of the list, German MEP Dagmar Roth-Behrendt of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the second-largest party in the European Parliament after the conservative group, said, *"The list we have is a good list as these health claims are justifiable"*. Ms Roth-Behrendt was obediently supported by Linda McAvan MEP, who declared consistency a sin: *"Most of [the] companies which are complaining are those which were opposed to the list from the beginning"*. She added, *"Let's vote for the positive list, let's vote for consumers"*.

ANH-Intl argues to the contrary: that it is consumers throughout Europe who have the most to lose — and who have been doing a lot of the complaining. It is the largest companies who have been supporting the claims regime, companies that are linked to the big trade associations like FoodDrinkEurope.

ANH International

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ANH-Intl Regional Offices



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The loss of health claims in the marketplace, ANH-Intl has long argued, will prevent consumers from discriminating between healthy and less-healthy foods and nutrients, especially as time passes following the prohibition of so many generic health claims.

Responding to the inevitable passage of the health claims list into EU law at the end of the month, when it goes to a plenary vote in the European Parliament, Dr Verkerk said, *“Our main focus now needs to be on the rejected claims list, EFSA’s methods of scientific assessment, especially as they relate to botanicals, and implementation strategies of individual Member States.”*

ENDS

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NOTES FOR THE EDITOR

ANH-Intl article about ENVI vote issued concurrently to this release (22 March 2012):

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EU Register of nutrition and health claims made on foods:

<http://ec.europa.eu/nuhclaims/>

ANH-Intl MEP position paper, 15 March 2012:

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

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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.