

EU NOVEL FOODS REG

“A trap for botanical products and other beneficial ingredients”

Official reference:

Regulation (EC) No 258/1997, as amended

Synonyms:

Novel Foods Regulation, NFR

Challenges for natural health

- Imposed in 1997 with the original intention of protecting consumers from genetically modified (GM) foods
- Requires pre-market authorisation of any food or food constituent not deemed to have been used ‘significantly’ in the EU prior to the date of NFR’s passage into law (15 May 1997)
- Since GM foods were regulated separately (as of 2001), the NFR has acted as a ‘trap’ for foods and ingredients of non-European origin, even where these have been used for decades or centuries elsewhere
- More and more Member State regulators are now classifying botanical ingredients contained in food supplements as novel, based on the form, processing or extraction method used
- Novel food and medicinal classification by authorities work together to present a major barrier for sale of botanical, fungal and algal products used in food supplements and functional foods
- Functional foods can be ‘caught’ by NFR because of concentration or modification of one or more components in original food(s)
- Definition of ‘novel food’ in NFR is excessively broad and lacks clarity
- Simplified authorisation system for botanicals insufficiently clarified
- Novel food classification by EU Novel Food Working Group (e.g. Novel Food Catalogue) lacks scientific basis

Solutions for natural health

- Pressure on European institutions is needed to avoid unnecessary classification of foods or food constituents (especially botanicals) as novel
- Clarity required for simplified authorisation system for botanicals
- Scope of definition of a novel food should be narrowed and clarified