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PRESS RELEASE

EFSA takes forward its work on Nutrition and Health Claims

Consultation begins on draft guidance for health claims applications

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is today publishing for consultation its draft guidance to applicants on the submission of health claims for authorisation. EFSA's NDA Panel¹ will assess the scientific evidence substantiating these claims. The Panel is also progressing work on other nutrition issues including nutrient profiles, which will help define the nutrient criteria that foods should comply with in order to bear nutrition and health claims. A scientific colloquium on nutrient profiles is planned for September.

At present the scientific basis for nutrition and health claims on foods is not always clear. EFSA aims to ensure that companies who want to submit health claims for authorisation will have clear guidance on what they need to include in their application, in particular concerning the scientific data and evidence required to support their claims. The draft Guidance Document will be out for consultation from today until 17 June 2007. A meeting with stakeholders (i.e. industry, consumer organisations and other NGOs) is planned for 11 June in Parma to discuss and exchange views with the Panel's Chair Professor Albert Flynn, Panel members and EFSA scientists. EU Member States are also being invited to comment on the draft Guidance Document.

The assessment of a health claim by EFSA is the first step in the authorisation process. Only those claims which are scientifically substantiated will finally be authorised for use. The final approval of a health claim is the responsibility of the European Commission and Member States, based on the scientific assessment expressed in the opinion of EFSA's Panel. This approach will guarantee that consumers can rely on a health claim made on a label and will help consumers to make informed choices for a healthy, balanced diet. It is the first time that a harmonised approach for authorising health claims has been established across EU Member States².

The draft Guidance document is available on the EFSA website at:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/nda/nda_consultation/health_claim.html

The mandates received from the European Commission can be found at:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/nda/requests_mandates.html

Further information on EFSA's role in the field of Nutrition and Health Claims is available at:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/in_focus/nutrition_health.html

¹ EFSA Panel on dietetic products, nutrition and allergies (NDA)

² http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_012/l_01220070118en00030018.pdf

Notes for editors

What is a health claim?

A health claim is any statement used on labels, in marketing or in advertising that health benefits can result from consuming a given food or from one of its constituents, e.g. statements that a food could lower cholesterol or improve bowel function. Other examples include claims on the reduction of disease risk or on nutrients and other substances that may improve or modify the normal functions of the body, e.g. statements that omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease or that calcium helps to maintain strong bones.

What are nutrient profiles?

The Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation specifies that only foods with appropriate nutrient profiles may bear nutrition and health claims. Nutrient profiles are nutrient content criteria which can be used to categorise foods as being eligible to bear claims. It is EFSA's role to provide the scientific advice that will be used by the European Commission to establish nutrient profiles. Applied to foods, nutrient profiles will guarantee that the consumer is not misled regarding the overall nutritional quality of foods bearing claims.

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