

**JOINT ALLIANCE FOR NATURAL HEALTH/  
IRISH ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTH STORES  
PRESS RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

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**EUROPEAN NATURAL HEALTH INTERESTS URGE THE EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION TO RE-THINK ITS POLICY ON NATURAL HEALTH**

**A delegation from the Irish Association of Health Stores (IAHS), the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) and Irish member of the European Parliament (MEP), Marian Harkin, met with senior European Commission officials yesterday to voice their concerns over the severity of likely imminent restrictions on natural health.**

*Jill Bell, chairman of the IAHS said, "Irish consumers' concerns about the direction the European Union is heading in is being influenced significantly by the impending restrictions on natural health products. We had over 60,000 consumers sign our petition in Irish health stores to register our concerns over EU-wide vitamin and mineral dose restrictions likely hit us in 2009 or 2010. We really hope that the European Commission is going to listen."*

Presenting the key technical concerns to Paola Testori Coggi, Deputy Director General of the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General of the European Commission, and Basil Mathioudakis, Head of the Food Law Unit in the Commission, was Dr Robert Verkerk, executive and scientific director of the ANH.

*Dr Verkerk stated, after the meeting, "When you consider that the maximum daily vitamin and mineral levels the European Commission are considering for food supplements are much less than you'd find in a single, average meal—you know there's a problem. You could find three times the possible maximum selenium level in a single brazil nut, or three times the beta-carotene level in a single large raw carrot or three times the zinc level in a single 200 g steak."*

*Dr Verkerk added, "The European Commission needs to re-think it's approach or small businesses across Europe that will be impacted by the impending measures will inevitably be forced to consider a legal challenge."*

The delegation presented its concerns not only over vitamin and mineral dose restrictions, but also over the proposed ban on vitamin and mineral forms on 1 January 2010, restrictions on herbal preparations and their potential impact on herbal-producing communities in less-developed countries, and the restrictions on health claims, which, the delegation argued amounted to an imposition on free speech.

The delegation indicated that the European Commission, until now, has been taking soundings from a particular sector of the natural products industry that represents larger companies—including the pharmaceutical industry—to the exclusion of the interests of many small to medium size enterprises (SMEs) across Europe.

Dr Verkerk commented that it was heartening to have been heard by the European Commission and the Commission has asked for further interaction over some of the key concerns raised by the delegation. He also indicated that there was a real risk that some natural health products, such as those that have been used traditionally as medicines in non-European cultures, could fall between various stools in EU legislation and could be legislated out of existence simply because the laws were technically impossible or prohibitively expensive to access.

Erica Murray, also representing the IAHS at the meeting in Brussels, said,

*"The voice of smaller businesses operating in the natural products industry has not been heard to-date by those drawing up the regulations. Yesterday's discussions established the possibility of a new dialogue with the Commission and our sector, and we now feel there's everything to play for. The meeting has demonstrated that the positions adopted by organisations such as the IAHS and the ANH do indeed have validity both in science and in law."*

Marian Harkin, a Member of the European Parliament (North and West European Constituency of Ireland), who led the delegation, added, *"While I advocated a Yes vote in the recent Lisbon referendum, I know, from my own experience in the EU and from the concerns expressed by many citizens, that people are very concerned about the fact that a "one size fits all" policy sometimes emerges from the EU. One such issue is that of natural health and it is very important to people who want to be in a position to make their own informed choices rather than having to follow EU dictates. More and more people are choosing to take greater responsibility for their own health and the ability to buy safe and effective natural remedies that they are paying for out of their own pockets is of great importance to them. In my opinion European legislation should above all else respond to the real needs of citizens in each Member State and in the case of the Supplements Directive it should also respond to the best available scientific evidence in order to guarantee the most accurate information for consumers so that they can make informed choices."*

ENDS.

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## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

### **ANH Briefing Notes – presented jointly with the IAHS at the meeting:**

1. Link to position on the Food Supplements Directive:  
[http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630\\_ANH-Briefing-Paper\\_FSD-general.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630_ANH-Briefing-Paper_FSD-general.pdf)
2. Link to position on Maximum Permitted Levels (MPLs):  
[http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630\\_ANH-Briefing-Paper\\_FSD-MPLs.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630_ANH-Briefing-Paper_FSD-MPLs.pdf)
3. Link to position on Nutrition & Health Claims Regulation:  
[http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630\\_ANH-Briefing-Paper\\_NHCR.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630_ANH-Briefing-Paper_NHCR.pdf)
4. Link to position on Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive:  
[http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630\\_ANH-Briefing\\_Paper\\_THMPD.pdf](http://www.anhcampaign.org/files/080630_ANH-Briefing_Paper_THMPD.pdf)

### **About Marian Harkin MEP**

[www.marianharkin.ie](http://www.marianharkin.ie)

Irish Member of the European Parliament for the North and West European Constituency of Ireland.

### **About the Alliance for Natural Health**

[www.anhcampaign.org](http://www.anhcampaign.org)

The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) is an international, non-governmental organisation, based in the UK. It was founded in 2002, and works on behalf of consumers, medical doctors, complementary health practitioners and health-product suppliers worldwide, to protect and promote natural healthcare, using the principles of good science and good law.

The ANH's overriding goal is to help develop appropriate legal-scientific frameworks for the development of sustainable approaches to healthcare, while also helping to promote natural health as a viable option in mainstream healthcare. Within this setting, consumers and health professionals should be able to make informed choices about a wide range of health options, and in particular those that relate to diet, lifestyle and non-drug-based or natural therapies, so that they may experience their benefits to the full while not exposing themselves to unnecessary risks.

The ANH has pioneered the concept of sustainability as applied to healthcare—a concept that is already the most acceptable long-term approach for a variety of other industries, including agriculture, energy, construction and tourism. But pharmaceutically based, orthodox western medicine has strenuously avoided

associating itself with the notion of sustainability. Orthodox medicine is now considered to be the third leading cause of death in industrialised countries in the West, and it is increasingly threatening and continuing to replace long-established traditional systems of healthcare from Asia, southern Africa, South America and other parts of the world.

### **About the Irish Association of Health Stores**

[www.irishhealthstores.com](http://www.irishhealthstores.com)

The IAHS is a professional trade association, which represents over 80% of the health stores in the Republic of Ireland.

Health food is the fastest growing sector of food retailing in Ireland, and representing over 100 member stores, the IAHS exists to ensure that health food retailing is ethical, responsible, truthful and professional.

Founded in 1986, the Association operates under a written constitution and member stores are required to adhere to a strict Code of Ethics