

PRESS RELEASE

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ONEROUS LAWS FOR BOTANICALS THREATENS CONSUMER CHOICE

Last Friday, 15 February, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) closed the doors on its public consultation concerning approaches to the regulation of botanical products as food supplements in the EU. The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) was among several organisations and governments responding to the consultation and has indicated its concern that large numbers of plant-derived products or botanicals, which pose no risk to human health, and have numerous benefits, will be forced through an onerous risk assessment procedure. The proposed procedure is likely to be cost-prohibitive for smaller companies that have been the main pioneers and innovators within the natural health industry. Many of the larger companies have little interest in such products, which are currently freely available on the EU market as food supplements.

Dr Robert Verkerk, executive and scientific director of the ANH, said “With the trend for increasing simplification of western diets, including the over-consumption of simple carbohydrates and inadequate diversity of fruit and vegetables, botanical supplementation is an important tool for the enhancement of people’s diets. It makes no sense to limit freedom of choice for those who choose to take responsibility for their health.”

The ANH is concerned that EU control over natural healthcare – and particularly the imposition of unnecessarily and often prohibitively high data thresholds to keep products on the market – is going to unfairly and disproportionately affect the availability of safe, beneficial products already on the market.

Another European Directive, the Biocidal Products Directive, has already banned a wide range of natural essential oils, including eucalyptus, tea tree, thyme and citronella, for use as insect repellents and personal deodorants. Without this choice, consumers are forced to use synthetic versions widely available in major multiples. The ban on the products came into force on 1 September 2006 after natural product suppliers were unable to afford the cost of submitting dossiers for EU approval.

Dr Verkerk added, “If the industry doesn’t work to achieve a fairer regulatory regime which grandfathered in botanicals that have had long histories of safe use, a similar fate to natural oils used as repellents and deodorants could befall dozens of key botanicals used in food supplements across the EU.”

The ANH was successful last August in getting the European Commission to agree that usage of natural sources of vitamins and minerals was outside the scope of the EU Food Supplements Directive. Despite this concession, there is a substantial risk for non-vitamin and mineral containing botanicals falling foul of the prescriptive and onerous European regulatory framework for natural health products.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

European Food Safety Authority

For further information about the EFSA consultation on botanicals, please see:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/KeyTopics/efsa_locale-1178620753812_botanicals.htm

Biocidal Products Directive

Note on ban effective from 1 September 2006 from UK competent authority, the Health & Safety Executive:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/1septdeadline.htm>

European Chemicals Bureau website concerning biocidal products:

<http://ecb.jrc.it/biocides>

About the Alliance for Natural Health

The Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) is a UK-based, international, non-governmental organisation, founded in 2002, that is working 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 principal objective is to help develop an appropriate legal-scientific framework and environment for the development of sustainable approaches to healthcare, while helping to promote natural health. 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.

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