



EUROPEAN FOOD AND FEED CULTURES ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES FABRICANT DE FERMENT A USAGE AGRO-ALIMENTAIRE

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DISCUSSION PAPER ON
NUTRITION CLAIMS AND FUNCTIONAL CLAIMS
sanco/1341/2001

POSITION OF EFFCA.

EFFCA welcomes this first step in the process of harmonization of rules on nutrition claims and functional claims within the EU.

EFFCA has the following specific comments to the discussion paper:

Definition

The existing definition of a nutrition claim (Council Directive 90/496/EEC) concerns nutrients or substances having a nutritional function, such as protein, vitamin and mineral.

An increased number of other substances with a beneficial influence on human health do not have direct nutritional effect but rather a physiological effect. It is highly important that substances like probiotics (lactic bacteria) and antioxidants like lutein and lycopene will be included in the future regulations on health claims.

Probiotics

On an international level there is a growing interest in the development of new and more active strains. Considerable resources have been allocated to the research of probiotics within the framework of EU and by the manufacturers of probiotics. It is highly important that the documented results of probiotics influencing the health of humans can be communicated to the consumers. An EU harmonization of health claims also including probiotics is therefore recommended.

Of course, the future rules for nutritional claims have to be in line with other EU regulations. E.g. new strains are likely to be classified as novel food. According to the novel food regulation a change has to be labelled. The present rules prevent the manufactures from doing this in a proper and informative way.

Criteria for making nutrient claims

All current probiotic strains used are unique with specific strain properties. The substantiation of health claim for probiotics has to be proven for the specific strain. Therefore, it is unlikely that generic claims can be made for all probiotic strains.

In national regulations/guidelines for health claims it has been stated that “only health claims for products which are in accordance with the dietary recommendations” can be allowed. Health claims for substances like probiotics and antioxidants also ought to be acceptable, even though these cannot be directly linked up to the dietary recommendations, but they still have a documented effect on health.

Evaluation and authorization system for claims

EFFCA highly supports a centralized notification procedure on a European level in order to avoid disputes on national or intracommunity levels. The scientific evaluation of the substantiation of the health claim has to be performed by independent scientific experts in the specific field.