

Brussels 08/11/2017

Health Claims – Industry calls for action to promote Innovation

A European Parliament workshop focusing on innovation in health claims and the specific issue of probiotics was kindly hosted by Italian MEP Nicola Caputo and French MEP Angelique Delahaye, in cooperation with EHPM was held in the European Parliament on 7 November. The event was moderated by Kate Trollope, Editor of EU Food Policy, and analysed the situation regarding Article 13.5 Health Claims, Pre-Submission Meetings and the ongoing probiotics situation.

The industry speakers, moderator and hosting MEP Caputo noted that regrettably the European Commission was not present to participate in an important debate on issues where clearly the industry feels that if no action is taken innovation in the food sector will continue to be negatively affected.

Dr. Valerio Curtui, Head of Nutrition Unit at EFSA, presented EFSA's approach to facilitating innovation and improving engagement with stakeholders. Dr Curtui addressed various queries in relation to EFSA's assessment of health claims and emphasised EFSA's viewpoint that the approach applied is both consistent with and required by the provisions of the health claims regulation as it stands.

EHPM Chair Michel Horn delivered a strong presentation about promoting the concept of a pre-submission model for health claims. He highlighted a health claims submission rejection rate of over 90% as clear evidence that the current system is not working, and proposed the introduction of pre-submission meetings and a graded approach for assessing evidence that would allow for different types of claims, with the strength of the evidence being reflected in the strength of the claim approved.

Dr. Pier Raffaele Spina, the National Secretary of the Italian association FAIS Onlus and Delegate Cittadinanzattiva provided the consumer perspective in his presentation.

Marie-Pascale Legrand from Yalacta, a successful SME probiotics company, presented a case study on probiotics. She criticised the Commission's failure to come up with a pragmatic solution for the use of the term probiotic on labelling. She added that *"using a document [the 2007 Commission guidance] with no legal effect that is ten years old to justify a policy approach that clearly does not work, is not acceptable"*.

A joint statement from EHPM, IPA Europe and EDA was also distributed at the event and this calls on the Commission to find a solution for the use of the term probiotic. The statement can be consulted here.

The last presentation was delivered by Dr. Bruno Scarpa from the Italian Ministry of Health. Dr. Scarpa provided a complete overview about the Italian approach to probiotics, explaining the Italian case for acceptance of the term 'Probiotic' as a nutrition claim.

The presentations and pictures from the workshop be downloaded from the EHPM website.

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For Further Information

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