



PRESS RELEASE

Conference puts spotlight on key issues for food supplements in EU

8 December 2011

More than 200 experts from across the world gathered in Berlin today at a conference to discuss existing and future challenges for marketing food supplements in the European Union (EU).

Organised by European association BLL and sponsored by European trade associations EHPM, ERNA, and EBF, and the global food supplement association IADSA, the conference saw attendees including representatives from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as various national regulatory authorities, academics and industry representatives.

Issues on the table included the highly controversial issue of health claims; plans for the setting of maximum levels for vitamins and minerals; and issues related to the use of other substances and specifically botanicals, which have currently been put on hold from the claims evaluation process.

“The topics we are discussing are controversial for the industry, but not only for industry,” said EHPM Chairman Peter van Doorn. “These issues are also controversial for regulators. Harmonisation to open up the European market is necessary, but how much harmonisation is needed? The challenge is to get things on a level playing field. There is progress, but there are a number of difficulties, which should not be the insurmountable problems that they currently seem to be.”

Basil Mathioudakis, Head of the European Commission’s food law unit DG SANCO, who attended the event, highlighted the successes of the harmonisation process to date and addressed issues that have not yet been completely harmonised.

He said: “Harmonisation is not complete or not as complete as some would have liked. Many would be quick to blame the Commission for not acting to further harmonise. Some of the issues we face in respect to further harmonisation continue to be controversial and have become political, and this has to be taken into account.”

“One objective was to principally harmonise vitamins and minerals in supplements and we have been quite successful at least in that area,” he continued. “Maximum levels has been an issue that has been there for a long time. These are not set yet. The intention is there to set those maximum levels and as the other priorities are being finalised we may see that the subject comes back.”

The conference, which started today (Thursday 8 December) will continue tomorrow (Friday 9 December), where the key issues of health claims and the use of botanicals and other substances in food supplements will be the focus of the day.



ENDS

Notes to Editor:

1. The European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM) was created in 1975, working to provide consumers with safe, science-based, high quality products as well as accurate and helpful information about their nutritional value and use.
2. To contact EHPM email secretariat@ehpm.be, tel + (32) 2 209 11 45, or visit www.ehpm.org
3. The European Responsible Nutrition Alliance (ERNA) works with industry, consumer and regulatory bodies to tackle controversial issues. www.erna.org
4. The European Botanical Forum aims to consolidate the efforts undertaken by national associations and individual companies to work to protect national systems currently in place, contribute to the creation of appropriate national systems where not currently in place, and build a pan-European system for the trade of herbs under food law. www.botanicalforum.eu
5. IADSA has more than doubled in size since its creation in 1998, representing more than 50 national trade associations and over 20,000 companies. www.iadsa.org
6. BLL is the German Federation of Food Law and Food Science. <http://www.bll.de/>