

EU: Health claims update

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has now released their fourth batch of opinions on health claims, and assessment of 442 Article 13 general function claims in areas such as protection against oxidative damage to body cells, contribution to either cognitive or bowel function; and maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels. For further details, see:
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/cs/Satellite>

Claim failures, according to EFSA, mainly relate to poor information: an *“inability to identify the specific substance on which the claim is based; the lack of evidence that the claimed effect is indeed beneficial to the maintenance or improvement of body functions; or the lack of precision regarding the health claim being made”*.

EFSA now intends to hold stakeholder consultations on:

- Bone, joint and oral health;
- Oxidative damage and cardiovascular health;
- Satiety, weight management and blood glucose concentrations.

The last 600 or so general function claims are due for assessment by June 2011, after which EFSA will consider botanical claims – there is currently a moratorium on the assessment of botanical claims, while EFSA considers how they should best be dealt with. (All botanical claims assessed to date have failed.)

Following the publication of the latest batch of claims, European industry associations, the European Botanical Forum (EBF), the European Federation of Health Product Associations (EHPM) and the European Responsible Nutrition Association (ERNA) put out a strongly worded joint press release urging the European Commission to undertake a discussion of the specificities and limitations of nutritional research and reappraise the claims evaluation process before rejecting claims based on EFSA opinions, because their continued reliance in the assessment process on criteria which are unfeasible and inappropriate for the majority of claims, is contributing to the high number of negative EFSA opinions.

Source: EBF, EHPM, ERNA