USA - The safety of new dietary ingredients

Supplement manufacturers are required to submit safety information to the federal government before placing a new product on the market. However as evidenced by Daniel Fabricant, director of the Division of Dietary Supplement Programs at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), this often does not happen. Dr Fabricant estimates that some 60,000 ingredients are sold as dietary supplements in the United States, but that the FDA has received only 700 new dietary ingredient review applications since the last major supplement law passed in 1994.

Currently, Congress is asking the FDA to spell out what it expects from the supplement industry, and the outcomes of this "guidance document", due at the end of June, could be huge. One unwelcome possibility is that the FDA might require health food stores remove thousands of products from retail shelves so that its scientists can make sure the products won't harm consumers. For its part, the supplement industry has complained that current FDA rules are confusing but that they are willing to submit safety data when necessary.

New dietary ingredient reviews only apply to ingredients introduced to the market after October 1994, when the law was signed. Any product sold before then is grandfathered in and considered safe.

Source: UNPA