



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UEAPME denounces Commission’s Proposal on Health Claims on Food as excessive and unfeasible for SMEs

Brussels, 14th January 2004. In a document sent today to Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne and Members of the European Parliament, UEAPME, the European SMEs employers’ association, criticised the Commission’s recent proposal to implement a general ban on health claims made on foods. The association labelled the Commission’s proposal as excessive and unfeasible for SMEs.

“Unfortunately, this proposal is just an illustration of the tendency of the EU’s foodstuffs policy. Too often we notice that regulations are made without examining the question whether SMEs and in particular micro enterprises will be able to meet the requirements of the regulations” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s Secretary General.

In its Position Paper, UEAPME is particularly critical of the provisions regarding the approval procedure by the EFSA for food and nutrition claims for SMEs will be disproportionate in time and too cost intensive for small foodstuffs producers. With an approval procedure similar to the ones undertaken for pharmaceutical products, small and in particular micro-businesses might be excluded from using nutritional value claims in the future. Therefore UEAPME calls for the inclusion of amendments that will accelerate the approval process.

Furthermore, UEAPME is against a total information and advertisement ban put forward in the proposal. The association argues that nutrition and health claims founded on recognised scientific findings and which consumers understand should be able to be used in the future. Recent ECJ rulings also back UEAPME arguments.

Additionally, UEAPME fears that the proposal might create a discrimination against particular groups of foodstuffs through a classification into “good” and “bad” foodstuffs on the basis of nutrient value profiles. It must be possible for all foodstuffs to be the subject of claims insofar as the information is accurate and applicable.

Finally, UEAPME questions European Commission’s initiative to propose a regulation on health claims as prohibitions of the misleading of consumers and provisions concerning nutritional value labelling are already established in EC law and – deriving from them – in the legal systems of the Member States.

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