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The EU Food Supplements Directive – not the end of life as we know it

Contrary to popular opinion – mainly caused by a lack of facts and media scare-mongering – the health food industry, and the nutritional supplements industry particularly, are not about to disappear forever.

Health shop employees are not about to be cast onto the unemployment scrapheap. Supplements companies are not shutting down their machines and locking their doors. Consumers are not suddenly going to be losing the products that they have come to rely on for their health.

Let's present some FACTS about the Food Supplements Directive (FSD):

- Only relates to vitamins and minerals. Products that do not contain either are unaffected (fatty acids, plant supplements, etc)
- Being introduced in two parts
- Part one comes into effect on 1 August 2005
- Part one basically consists of two "Positive Lists"; the first lists the vitamins and minerals allowed, the other lists the forms of those vitamins and minerals that are allowed

- Part two comes into effect in 2007
- Will set the permissible daily intake level for the vitamins and minerals on the Positive Lists
- The permissible levels are due to be set during 2005

- Currently around 270 vitamin or mineral ingredients are not on the Positive Lists
- Most are obscure, little used ingredients such as Vanadium
- Some, like selenomethionine (a popular source of Selenium), are more widely used
- Generally, all of the widely used vitamins and minerals are included on the Positive Lists in one form or another
- This means that no more than a handful of products will have to be withdrawn
- Supplement companies are working to re-formulate their products – where necessary – rather than remove them from sale
- Formulations do not need to be reduced in strength at this stage – a 1000mg Vitamin C can stay as a 1000mg Vitamin C

- Health Plus are currently reviewing all their products for compliance with the FSD
- No products will be withdrawn
- Only a few need to change slightly – a different form of Selenium, a different form of Magnesium, etc

- Whilst at an advanced stage, the FSD is still not 100% set in stone. There are still many things that can be done to oppose it; consumers can still make their point of view known by writing to their MP, signing the petition at

www.conservatives.com/vitamins and supporting campaigns by Consumers for Health Choice and the Alliance for Natural Health

- The industry is also still fighting and legal challenges to the FSD – one presented by the National Association of Health Stores (NAHS) and the Health Food Manufacturers Association (HFMA) and one by the Alliance for Natural Health (ANH) – were heard on 25 January. Initial feelings are positive, with the judge commenting that certain parts of the legislation seemed “as transparent as a black box”. The judge’s opinion is expected in April followed by a final judgement in June
- The FSD is intended to protect consumer safety, and this is to be applauded. Its introduction should help to stop the “fly-by-night” operators who give the whole industry a bad name. However, it severely limits consumer choice and this is a backward step as far as the UK supplements industry is concerned, as we have traditionally enjoyed greater freedom than our European partners. The intention to harmonise the rules across the EU means greater freedom for many of the other countries but not for us and most UK consumers do not want to lose their freedom of choice.