

-Press Release-

Wednesday, 05 March 2008

Petition on Food Supplements to be investigated by the European Commission

A petition on the new food supplements Directive has been today declared admissible by the European Parliament Petitions Committee.

Commenting from Brussels, Kathy Sinnott, MEP, said *"People across Europe are mourning the loss of their daily vitamins and minerals. A new food supplements Directive in the EU will now reduce the availability of food supplements. The importance of this in Ireland is the draconian decrease in dosages of vitamins and minerals to the RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance). If a person wishes to take supplements more than the RDA, they will require a doctor's prescription. These minimalist levels are only enough to keep away deficiency diseases but it is not enough to contribute to good health much less enhance health."*

The petition, taken by Jill Bell on behalf of the Irish Association of Health Stores, is being hosted by Independent MEP for Ireland South Kathy Sinnott. Mrs. Sinnott, who is vice president of the Petitions Committee, welcomes the admissibility of the food supplements petition. She says, *"This is wonderful news. The Petitions Committee will now send the petition to the European Commission for its opinion and investigation. Ms Bell's petition represents the Health Food Shops and people all over Ireland who take and rely on Health Food Supplements in an age where there is a recognition of the denutrition of soils, pollution and too much processed foods, and where vitamins and minerals are more important than ever."*

The Irish Association of Health Stores is a trade association representing 80% of health food stores in Ireland. While it supports rules governing food supplements, it takes the view that Directive 2002/46/EC, on the approximation of the laws of the Member States, relating to food supplements is inappropriate and particularly disproportionate to the levels of risk involved. While the ceiling limits have not yet been published, it is clear that they will unjustifiably restrict access to food supplements which have proved safe and effective in Ireland and the UK for over 40 years. The Irish Association of Health Stores maintains that Member States should be able to choose whether the decision is made by the authorities, the consumers and/or the organisations concerned, thereby ensuring continued access to the above food products, which have traditionally been sold in the Member States and in particular, Ireland and the UK.

Mrs. Sinnott continues *"It is completely unacceptable that Irish and European legislation would deny citizens the right to protect their health with vitamins and minerals at the dose and form that they require. In Brussels we talk a lot about healthy eating and exercise. However, in a world with pollution, stressful schedules, depleted soils etc, this is often not enough. Denying access to food supplements above the RDA except on prescription favors pharmaceutical companies and the medical profession but discriminates against health professionals and suppliers. Where is*

democracy? It is ridiculous that people's choices are being taken away from them. People must draw the line. This petition is sending a clear message to the Commission and Irish Government that we are not willing to hand simple choices around our nutrition over to Europe."

The Food Supplements Directive was a particular project of the former Irish Commissioner David Byrne. *"It is not surprising that Ireland should be faced with the worst version of the Directive considering this fact,"* concludes Kathy.

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Note to Editor:

- The above petition is Petition No. 1037/2007 by Jill Bell (Irish) on behalf of the Irish Association of Health Stores, concerning Directive 2002/46/EC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to food supplements.
- Petitions deemed admissible by the Petitions Committee will be sent to the European Commission for its opinion. The Commission will investigate the matter and contact all the relevant national authorities to establish the facts. This is a lengthy process and can take a number of months. When all the facts have been gathered, the petition will be heard before the Petitions Committee in the presence of MEPs and the Commission. The petitioners will have the opportunity to travel to Brussels to present their petition. The Petitions Committee will then make a decision on the petition.
- Directive 2002/46/EC can be sourced here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:183:0051:0057:EN:PDF>