

PRESS RELEASE – 07 June 2006

European Commission issues discussion paper on the setting of maximum and minimum amounts for vitamins and minerals in foodstuffs

A joint EHPM – ERNA response

The European Commission published today a discussion paper on the setting of maximum and minimum amounts for vitamins and minerals in foodstuffs. It sets consumer safety and informed choice as its major priorities for establishing EU-wide maximum levels in food supplements and fortified foods.

The principles underlying the setting of maximum levels in food supplements and fortified foods are laid down in the Directive 2002/46/EC relating to food supplements and in the forthcoming Regulation of the addition of vitamins and minerals and of certain other substances to foods. Both legislative texts require that maximum limits for vitamins and minerals will be set based on scientific risk assessment, where safety is the guiding principle and data on vitamin and mineral intake from other dietary sources, while also taking due account of what is considered an adequate vitamin and mineral intake for an average person.

These principles would not allow the setting of upper limits around the level of recommended daily allowances (RDA); only for those nutrients for which there is a risk of adverse effects at low levels, due account should be taken of the RDA. Their objective is to continue to allow access to a wide range of safe food supplements by consumers regularly taking higher levels of vitamins and minerals to enhance their health.

The adoption of maximum levels will lead to a true harmonised EU framework for vitamin and mineral food supplements, removing existing barriers to trade because of diverging, often unduly restrictive national regulations and practices.

The European Responsible Nutrition Alliance (ERNA), an alliance of food supplement manufacturers and suppliers and the European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM) support the steps being taken by the Commission and aims at collaborating actively to the exercise of setting maximum levels. “The European Food Safety Authority has finalised its risk assessment task for setting upper tolerable levels, so now the decision process needs to take these into consideration in establishing the actual levels”, Peter van Doorn, chairman of EHPM says. “ERNA / EHPM scientists have developed a risk management model for the setting of maximum levels in food supplements that is based on this scientific risk assessment and takes into consideration



current intakes of vitamins and minerals from food supplements and other sources in the diet, including fortified foods”, Gert Krabichler, chairman of ERNA says. “We trust that this model is a useful tool for the European Commission when proposing maximum levels. We will continue to collaborate to maintain our consumer’s choice of a wide variety of safe and useful food supplements.”

Comments on the discussion paper from interested parties are awaited before 30 September. ERNA and EHPM will organise a workshop after the summer break in order to stimulate further discussion.

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