

Brussels, 6 April 2005

**Subject: Vote on Nutrition & Health Claims proposal – 21 April 2005**

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

I am writing with reference to the proposed Regulation on Nutrition & Health Claims (COM(2003) 424). As you know, many of your colleagues on the ENVI Committee have tabled amendments to this proposal in advance of the voting session scheduled for **21 April 2005**.

As a Member of the ENVI Committee you are certainly aware of the political importance that a large number of European stakeholders attach to this legislative dossier.

Since the publication of the proposal in July 2003 **EURO COOP** - the European Community of Consumer Co-operatives - has been actively contributing to the related EU legislative debate. As a recognized European stakeholder, EURO COOP has been consulted by the competent Commission services in the preparatory stage of the proposal as well as in its subsequent developments. In addition, EURO COOP along with other NGOs recently organised a briefing session for the Members of the new European Parliament in order to disseminate useful information in the perspective of the current debate within the European Parliament.

I should like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to those elements of the proposal that are priorities for EURO COOP member organisations across Europe.

Firstly, **Article 4**: EURO COOP has always supported the inclusion of nutrient profiles as a pre-requisite to making a claim on foods. We firmly believe that in order to provide consumers with truthful and unambiguous information only foods with desirable nutrient profiles should be allowed to bear nutrition and health claims. Full consultation with the European Food Safety Authority and consumer groups must also be ensured when establishing them.

As to the criteria to follow in the development of such profiles, we suggest paying particular attention not only to the role and the importance of a given food in the diet and to its overall composition, but also to the presence of those nutrients - i.e., salt, sugar and fats – whose over-consumption is widely recognized as one of the main causes of the current obesity epidemic.

Secondly, **Article 11**: health claims made on foods. EURO COOP believes that the strict ban originally envisaged by the Commission should be toned-down. The proposed text does not seem to give correct consideration to the rapid and constant evolution of the scientific progress. We therefore believe that certain health claims should be allowed, provided they are backed by sound scientific evidence and subject to a prior authorisation system.

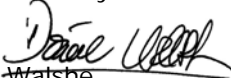
Thirdly, and finally, we fear that the current Commission proposal does not offer an adequate level of protection from potentially misleading claims to vulnerable groups, in particular **children**. It is a fact that more and more children's dietary habits tend to be influenced by food advertisements. We therefore believe that in the case of children the use of a nutrition and/or a health claim for marketing purposes by food operators should be strictly regulated.

In the light of the concerns expressed above, we have identified the following short list of amendments tabled by your colleagues that fulfil our expectations and which we would therefore kindly invite you to consider supporting, namely amendments: **9, 10, 12, 20, 123, and 215**..

We hope that you will take on board our concerns.

Thank you for your time and attention in this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

  
Dónal Walshe  
Secretary General