

EFSA workshop in Amsterdam (2 December 2010), microbial food cultures industry welcome the initiative and request pre-submission consultation

The European Food and Feed Cultures Association welcomes the initiative taken by EFSA towards a better dialogue and understanding of the criteria requirement for the health claims approval in the area of Gut Health and Immunity. The organisation of such a workshop, the time and means dedicated to that initiative need to be praised. Some advances were made. Notably the decision to regularly update the guidelines on gut and immune function is an important step in terms of dialogue and expertise sharing.

The workshop provided an opportunity to explore various solutions but to that extent, EFSA did not meet the expectations of the participants: many scientific aspects remained unanswered.

Most importantly, the workshop revealed that many questions are specifically related to individual claims and therefore cannot be covered by a general guidance.

Therefore, we are convinced that an improvement of approval process is **necessary**. One solution could be to establish pre-submission consultation meetings which would be mutually beneficial to both EFSA and the applicants. Such a measure was suggested during the workshop by various stakeholders, and supported by the food and drink industries.

Such consultations would not only benefit the quality of future applications but also impact the rate of positive opinions. Moreover, these consultations could – in the long run - lower the cost to EFSA, as the majority of the applications would improve and be properly presented and structured.

The impact of EFSA's negative opinions is deeply disconcerting, both in terms of the time and effort invested in clinical trials, but also in terms of credibility and the impact on public opinion.

EFFCA strongly believes that working together in a positive and constructive way would be beneficial for consumers, institutions as well of the academia and the industry.

For further information, please contact

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About EFFCA

The European Food & Feed Cultures Association - EFFCA - was formed in 1992 with the objective of enhancing public knowledge of the use of microbial cultures within the food chain through accurate, fair and scientifically based information. EFFCA represents sixteen manufacturing companies accounting for more than 95% of the microbial food cultures, including probiotics, sold in Europe.