

Press Information:

**First Latin American Conference on Food Supplements
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; 8 – 9 October, 2003**

IADSA

LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS AGREE NEED FOR COMMON APPROACH TO FOOD SUPPLEMENT REGULATION

LATEST NEWS FROM CODEX OPENS THE WAY

The first Latin American Conference on Food Supplements, organised by IADSA (International Alliance of Dietary Supplements Associations) in Rio de Janeiro in October, produced a clear recognition of the need for a common approach to regulations in the region. There was a demand for increased collaboration and consultation from the 17 regulators of the participating Latin American countries and other key regions of the world.

More than 200 experts from governments, scientific bodies and industry, including Codex Alimentarius, the European Commission, the USA's Office of Dietary Supplements, Canada's Office of Natural Health Products and Japan's Health and Nutrition Foods Association met for two days to address the needs and issues that affect the creation of a practical regulatory and marketing framework for the region. They heard how current regulations in the region are often inappropriately restrictive and many are not being enforced.

Many Latin American countries are now seeking to establish or improve their own regulations, often without sufficient access to information on the approaches being adopted by other countries in the region or to the experiences of other regions of the world. Dr Jeronimas Maskeliunas, Food Standards Officer from Codex Alimentarius Commission in Rome, outlined the work that is being carried out at the global level to reach a degree of regulatory harmonisation in the area. Although the work of Codex was supported by many speakers, its slow speed of operation was seen as a major obstacle to resolving many issues which countries are facing today. However, the recent breakthrough on the Codex Draft Guidelines for Vitamin and Mineral Food Supplements now promises to clear the way for change to national regulations.

Many speakers made clear that food supplements have an essential role in the nation's diet in the years ahead if the world is to manage nutritional needs of undernourished populations and the economics of health care of longer living populations. This view was supported by the groundbreaking report, "Nutrition in Transition", written and presented by Professor David Richardson, specialist adviser in nutrition and food science, which claimed that *"the burden of disease is shifting towards diet-related chronic diseases"* and that *"it is critical for countries to focus on a full understanding of these shifts, their causes and ways to address them"*.

Calls were made for national conferences that would help direct future national frameworks based on sound science and fair claims, product quality and safety, and the widest freedom of choice. Randy Dennin, IADSA chairman, said *“IADSA will work with the national bodies to inform the discussions and facilitate the decisions. The Alliance was set up for precisely this task and will provide a platform for the debate and exchange of information”*

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Summary of the conference programme:

Day 1 examined the role and safety of supplements against the background of changing perceptions of values and new challenges for the risk assessors and the regulators. Reports of the experiences of the EU and the USA, were followed by insights into the differences in experience and regulations in four representative countries – Brazil, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay – and a round-up discussion joined by Chile and Bolivia.

Day 2 focussed on the benefits of supplements and how scientific information and health claims should be made to the consumer. Dr Carlos Daniel Magnoni (University of Sao Paulo) reviewed the contribution of a wide spectrum of ingredients. Then three ministries of health from Latin America gave their views on health claims – Argentina, Brazil and Chile – followed by the experiences in the development of Canada’s innovative new Natural Health Products regulations by the Office of Natural Health Products and a presentation of Japan’s approach to claims by the Japan Health and Nutrition Foods Association. A final discussion then included officials from Mexico and Peru on the issues that arose.

The conference was organised by the worldwide organisation IADSA (the International Alliance of Dietary/Food Supplements Associations) which currently has 43 member associations across the world. Similar conferences have been held by IADSA in Africa and Asia in the last two years with great success. They have resulted in action programmes that have equipped the region’s national governments to formulate compatible regulations, learning from the views and experiences of their neighbours and other regions of the world whilst also addressing any differences in the cultural and nutritional needs of the countries’ populations.

The next IADSA Regional Conference will take place on 26-27 May in Prague, Czech Republic and will focus on food supplements following the expansion of the European Union.

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November 2003

Note to Editors:

Attached is an extract from the Conclusions of the conference by Loren Israelsen. For the full document, visit IADSA'S web site www.iadsa.org

For the press release on the recent breakthrough on the Codex Draft Guidelines for Vitamin and Mineral Food Supplements (Bonn, November 3 and 4), visit IADSA's web site www.iadsa.org

For more information on the Latin American Conference programme, please contact David Pineda, Regulatory Affairs Manager, IADSA; mobile: +32 479 540 036 or tel: +32 2 209 1155; email davidpineda@iadsa.be

IADSA is the leading voice of the worldwide supplement manufacturing industry and an accredited international non-governmental organisation (INGO) with a seat at the table of the main international regulatory bodies. It represents 43 national trade associations and over 8,500 member companies.

IADSA provides a unique overview of the industry, identifying national and cultural differences and needs. It alerts government officials and the supplements industry to trends, changes and proposed regulations through a monthly news bulletin (Newsflash) which reports developments at global, regional and national levels. Its regional conferences bring together expert representatives at the highest levels to share experiences and formulate opinion on the science and the regulations which national governments and member trade associations can use in understanding and influencing proposed regulations. For more information on the African Conference (Cape Town, 2001) and/or the Asian Conference (Bangkok 2002), visit the web site www.iadsa.org

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First Latin American Conference on Food Supplements Rio de Janeiro, October 8-9, 2003

EXTRACT OF CONCLUSIONS OF CONFERENCE

Presented by Loren Israelsen, Executive Director, Utah Natural Products Alliance, USA

The goal of this conference was to provide a forum for regulators, industry and experts to share views and information on the best way to approach the regulation of dietary supplements in Latin America as well as the rest of the world. Clearly this goal has been achieved.

We can ... now draw four important conclusions:

- 1)** There is a global trend to reassess the regulation of dietary supplements in view of the growing public interest and use of supplements to promote health and prevent disease.
- 2)** Achieving the proper level of regulation is both difficult yet essential. If regulation is set too high, consumers lose access to products they want to use. Black markets are created whereby safety and quality cannot be assured, and domestic supplement industries die due to unnecessarily strict manufacturing requirements and low potency levels which are not interesting to many consumers, all of which create a lack of economic incentive. If, however, regulations are too low, false and misleading claims quickly get out of hand, safety problems can occur, and poor quality products begin to enter the market. In either case, the incentive to do research and to achieve a fair return on investment is damaged.
- 3)** The Canadian model presented by Dr. Phil Waddington may offer a useful framework for other governments and regulators to consider. This model has taken into account the regulatory experience from many other countries and has attempted to improve on the strengths and recognized weaknesses of these other systems. I believe many countries are now closely watching this system, and if it proves to be successful, it could likely become a model worth emulating elsewhere.
- 4)** There is great opportunity in Latin America to increase horizontal collaboration and cooperation and to allow free trade of dietary supplements within Latin America. This would promote the safe and beneficial use of dietary supplements, encourage growth of Latin American dietary supplement manufacturers and producers, while preventing false claims and unsafe products. Clearly, the countries of Latin America are better off working together than separately on this important issue.

IADSA and its national member organizations wish to offer their support and assistance to each of the participating Latin American countries at this conference to achieve the important goal of finding the proper level of regulation for dietary supplements for all the people living on this beautiful continent in their quest to live healthier and more productive lives.

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