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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

**AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION ON THE USE OF SUBSTANCES
OTHER THAN VITAMINS AND MINERALS IN FOOD SUPPLEMENTS**

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AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION ON THE USE OF SUBSTANCES OTHER THAN VITAMINS AND MINERALS IN FOOD SUPPLEMENTS

1. THE EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY (EFSA)¹

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), as part of a self-task initiated in 2004 with the aim of increasing the information available on plants and plant preparations used in food supplements, requested its Scientific Committee to:

- Analyse the available information.
- Prepare a guidance document on how to assess the safety of botanicals and of botanical preparations to be used in the food and feed area.
- Establish a list of the main categories of botanicals and botanical preparations and to prioritise the products to be considered for a safety assessment.

Guidelines as well as a compendium of botanicals that have been reported to contain toxic, addictive, psychotropic or other substances that may be of concern, have recently been finalised. These documents aim to provide the necessary information with a view to harmonising the assessment methodology regarding the safety of the concerned products by the different EFSA panels. In addition, they aim to draw attention to the issues that would need to be taken into account when assessing the safety of herbal substances in foods.

Further to this work a new mandate was given to an EFSA Scientific Cooperation (ESCO) working group covering the following:

- Enlarging the information basis underlying the compendium, and therefore improving its values.
- Prioritising botanicals for safety assessment and testing the proposed tiered approach for the safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations for a selected number of cases.
- Providing the EFSA Executive Director with the updated compendium, a report summarising the outcome of the case studies, and giving advice on the adequacy of the proposed tiered approach for the safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations for EFSA and Member States' needs.

2. COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON NUTRITION, FOOD SAFETY AND CONSUMER HEALTH OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE²

The Committee was created in 2002 as an ad hoc group of experts on food supplements.

¹ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178717026833.htm

² http://www.coe.int/t/e/social_cohesion/soc-sp/public_health/nutrition_food_consumer_health/Nutrition,%20food%20and%20consumer%20health_%20EN.asp#TopOfPage

This ad hoc group adopted in 2005 guidelines entitled ‘Quality, safety and marketing of plant-based food supplements’.

The aim of this work was to provide interested stakeholders with requirements that should be taken into account in the manufacture of safe products.

The ad hoc group also recently drew up two other documents of interest:

- ‘Homeostasis, a practical tool to distinguish between foods (including food supplements) and medicinal products’.
- ‘Populations possibly at risk’ in the event of ingestion of botanical supplements.