

European Health Claims for Small and Medium-Sized Companies – Utopian Dream or Future Reality?

Sonja Brandenburger*, Marc Birringer

¹Department of Nutritional, Food and Consumer Sciences, University of Applied Sciences Fulda, Fulda, Germany

***Corresponding author:** Sonja Brandenburger, Department of Nutritional, Food and Consumer Sciences, University of Applied Sciences Fulda, 35 Marquard Str., Fulda 36039, Germany

Submission date: October 30, 2014; Acceptance date: February 8, 2015; Publication date: February 11, 2015

ABSTRACT

Background: In December 2007, the European Regulation (EC) 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims came into force. The European Union wanted to regulate the use of health claims on products. An online survey was carried out to evaluate the situation, particularly of small and medium-sized companies, dealing with the new regulation.

Methods: The online survey on health claims was conducted with 16 enterprises. To underline the findings a SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was made of the nutrition and health claims regulation regarding small and medium-sized companies in the European food and drink market.

Results: The findings of this study indicated that the European Union did a step in the right direction. Most companies defined the decent competition, the simplified trade within the inner-European market, and the consumer protection as positive aspects. The biggest threat is seen in false investment conditioned by the limited research and development budgets, especially of small and medium-sized enterprises, and the cost intensive scientific evaluation to reach an authorized health claim.

Conclusions: Overall, there are several strengths and opportunities speaking for SMEs and health claims in the near future. The most promising ones are the publishing of the new European Union Register of Nutrition and Health Claims and the learning effects that will occur. The biggest threat is, and will remain to be, false investment and the possible loss of a lot of money. Nevertheless, health claims for small and medium-sized enterprises will inevitably be the future to keep the European food and drink market competitive.

Keywords: health claims, European Legislation, SME