

International appeal for European Commission to suspend use of suspect food additives

Forty two public interest organisations from twelve EU member states have appealed to the European Health Commissioner to suspend the use of six food colours that have been linked to increased hyperactivity in children. The calls, for the European Commission to act in the interest of the consumer, are in response to the recently issued European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) opinion on UK research known as the Southampton Study. The EFSA agreed that the additives tested in the study affected children's behaviour, but stated that there was no basis for action.

The signatories, who represent health, consumer and parent's groups from across the EU, argue that consumer health will be put at risk if the European Commission fails to act on this research. They point out that the European Commission has a responsibility to place the health of the consumer at the forefront of food policy, and to safeguard the wellbeing of children. The statement concludes that, to do nothing would seriously fail European consumers, and fall short of fulfilling the stated purpose for which the EFSA was initially formed.

Anna Glayzer of the Action on Additives campaign, and co-author of the statement asks, 'what purpose is served by the continued use of these food colours? They are purely cosmetic. We know that consumers from all over Europe, especially parents, do not want the colours in their food, and we know that manufacturers can replace the colours, as some have already started to reformulate.'

The UK Food Standards Agency (FSA), which commissioned the Southampton Study, will discuss the EFSA opinion on Thursday 10th April at their open board meeting in London. The FSA will recommend that its board support a mandatory European ban of the six colours, combined with a voluntary ban in the UK. Professor Jim Stevenson, co-author of the Southampton Study, has issued a strong rebuttal of the EFSA opinion, which will also be presented to the board.

On Friday 11th April, national experts will meet to discuss the outcome of the EFSA opinion at the Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health, part of the EU Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General (DG SANCO). MEPs Christel Schaldemose (Denmark) and Asa Westlund (Sweden) are currently circulating a petition amongst other MEPs, calling on the Commission to prohibit use of the six colours.

Notes to editors:

Full statement and list of signatures available at:

The six food colourings which, along with the preservative E211 Sodium Benzoate, were shown by the Southampton Study to increase hyperactivity in children:

- E102 Tartrazine
- E104 Quinoline Yellow
- E110 Sunset Yellow

- E122 Carmoisine
- E124 Ponceau 4R
- E129 Allura Red

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