

SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Opinion on the substantiation of health claims related to alpha-linolenic acid and maintenance of normal blood cholesterol concentrations (ID 493) and maintenance of normal blood pressure (ID 625) pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006¹

EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA)²

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Parma, Italy

SUMMARY

Following a request from the European Commission, the Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies was asked to provide a scientific opinion on a list of health claims pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation 1924/2006. This opinion addresses the scientific substantiation of health claims in relation to alpha-linolenic acid and the following claimed effects: maintenance of normal blood cholesterol concentrations and maintenance of normal blood pressure.

The food constituent that is the subject of the health claims is alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). The Panel considers that ALA is sufficiently characterised.

Maintenance of normal blood cholesterol concentrations

The claimed effect is “blood cholesterol”. The Panel assumes that the target population is the general population. The Panel considers that the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol concentrations is beneficial to human health.

On the basis of the data available, the Panel concludes that a cause and effect relationship has been established between the dietary intake of ALA and the reduction of blood cholesterol concentrations.

In order to bear the claim a food should contain at least 15% of the proposed labelling reference intake value of 2 g ALA per day. Such amounts can be easily consumed as part of a balanced diet. The target population is the general population.

1 On request from the European Commission, Question No EFSA-Q-2008-1280, EFSA-Q-2008-1412, adopted on 02 July 2009.

2 Panel members: Jean-Louis Bresson, Albert Flynn, Marina Heinonen, Karin Hulshof, Hannu Korhonen, Pagona Lagiou, Martinus Løvik, Rosangela Marchelli, Ambroise Martin, Bevan Moseley, Hildegard Przyrembel, Seppo Salminen, Sean (J.J.) Strain, Stephan Strobel, Inge Tetens, Henk van den Berg, Hendrik van Loveren and Hans Verhagen.
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Maintenance of normal blood pressure

The claimed effect is “blood pressure”. The Panel assumes the target population is the general population. The Panel considers that the maintenance of normal blood pressure is beneficial to human health.

In weighing the evidence the Panel took into account that the observed effects of ALA intake on blood pressure in the human intervention studies were inconsistent, the lack of evidence in these studies that study design, including the study size, was appropriate to demonstrate an effect of ALA on blood pressure, that cross-sectional studies have considerable limitations as a source of evidence for the claim, the lack of evidence for a plausible mechanism for the claimed effect.

On the basis of the data available, the Panel concludes that the evidence provided is insufficient to establish a cause and effect relationship between the dietary intake of ALA and the maintenance of normal blood pressure.

KEY WORDS

Alpha-linolenic acid, ALA, blood pressure, blood cholesterol, health claims.