

Alliance for Natural Health

URGENT FUNDING REQUIREMENT PROPER FUNDING IS ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORT A PROFESSIONAL AND EFFECTIVE APPROACH TO OPPOSING THE EUROPEAN DIRECTIVES

What is The Alliance?

The Alliance for Natural Health [ANH] (formerly Free Choice for Supplements Alliance) was formed in February 2002 to mount a professional media, scientific and public affairs-led campaign against the passage of the EU Food Supplements Directive (FSD). The campaign was deemed necessary, as the attention this issue had received to-date was insubstantial. The ANH was therefore formed to allow organisations, companies and individuals in the UK whose interests are threatened by the Food Supplements Directive to pool resources and speak with one voice in a professional, rational and co-ordinated campaign.

Although the Alliance campaign was launched only two weeks before the March 13 plenary vote in the EU Parliament, the Alliance still managed to help create a major swing of MEPs to oppose the directive. Thirty six percent of MEPs voted against the FSD, only an additional 15% being needed to have completely blocked it. The Alliance and its supporters were also instrumental in raising the level of public awareness over the FSD, and it quickly gained an unprecedented level of support amongst the media, MEPs and consumers across the UK.

What Are the Aims of the Alliance?

The ANH's aims are clear and straightforward: to oppose the Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive, the proposed amendments to the Medicines Directive and influence decisions relating to the Food Supplements Directive, both in Brussels and in EU member states. In addition, other aspects of legislation, such as the Novel Food Regulation (EC) 258/97, will also be targeted. The ANH exists solely to maintain unrestricted access to supplements and herbs that are wholly safe and effective; and in order to be able to pursue this objective is seeking support and funding from those whose businesses and livelihoods are threatened by these directives. The Alliance stresses that it is not looking to remove all legislation in the natural health products arena, but simply to have fair and reasonable legislation based upon fully informed and considered scientific, expert and public opinion and discussion; this clearly not being the case at present.

The Alliance's approach is to have a highly professional, well planned and coordinated campaign involving legal, political, public affairs and media relations initiatives based on firm, substantiated scientific evidence. It firmly believes this is the only way for businesses operating in the UK that stand to be affected by this European legislation to achieve continued free access to the full range of safe and leading edge natural health products that they produce, supply or administer. Practitioners and members of the public will be informed of progress and appropriate campaign actions through the media and direct mailings undertaken with cooperation and agreement of Alliance Members.

How Can You Help?

The immediate need is for funding a legal and legislative feasibility study to determine whether there exists a sufficient case to mount a direct legal challenge to the Food Supplements Directive and/or to persuade the European Commission to agree to realistic positive list requirements and RDAs. In addition a legal and legislative roadmap will be developed by our legal and public affairs advisors so that all possible channels of legal, legislative and political action can be exploited in order to protect the innovative sector of supplement industry and its many beneficiaries from the existing directives.

The Alliance will also provide a forum to allow manufacturers to pool resources required to compile dossiers should this be required. The Alliance aims to establish the most effective and appropriate legal, legislative and political strategies with respect to minimising the potential adverse impacts of the existing, draft Herbal and Medicines Directives. In addition, maintaining a minimum level of public affairs and media relations activity during this period is essential.

Why the Alliance is Approaching You

Unless a coordinated plan of action is commenced now, the practical impact of these directives will be to gradually remove from free sale the vast majority of high dose and leading-edge products currently available in the UK thus denying access to food supplements and herbs that around 40% of the population currently purchase on a regular basis. In addition, the directives will place severe constraints on the introduction of new nutrients and nutritional or herbal compounds. The prevention of herbal and nutrient combinations will have a detrimental effect on your companies' innovation and product effectiveness. **The ultimate impact of these Directives, if adopted in their original forms, will be to put many of these organisations manufacturing, supplying or administering these products out of business. Indeed, it is more than likely that your business will be seriously affected and it is therefore imperative for you to support the work the Alliance wishes to undertake in order to protect your commercial interests.**

Who Are the Alliance's Current Supporters and Allies?

The Alliance is extremely grateful to have had the support of Neways International (UK) Ltd and its Distributors, who generously contributed over £40,000 to the initial campaign against the Food Supplements Directive in February and March of this year. It is also deeply appreciative of the support provided by a number of manufacturers, highly respected practitioners and of the National Association of Health Stores (NAHS) and Consumers for Health Choice (CHC) for the considerable efforts they extended to making the initial campaign the success it was.

On 8 April a meeting was held in London with various UK and other European groups (at the Natural Products Europe expo) and a decision was made to create a pan-European alliance, the Natural Health Alliance - Europe, which will act as an umbrella organisation for the coordinated activities of key industry and/or consumer groups from the UK, Ireland, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands. None of the members of this pan-European Alliance are affiliated in any way to any perceived extremist groups campaigning on similar issues, or to the pharmaceutical industry.

Dr Robert Verkerk, a consultant on sabbatical from Imperial College, London, has agreed to take on the role of being responsible for the office of the Alliance.

What Is the Structure of the Alliance?

The Alliance has been established as a Company limited by guarantee. Independent companies will be invited to donate and become members of the Company, to whom the Alliance directorate will be wholly accountable. The Alliance aims to open its office in Guildford within the next two weeks, and will employ a permanently staffed Coordinator, as well as part-time Directors, including Dr Robert Verkerk and Dr Mark Atkinson, also Vice-President of the Complementary Medical Association. Staff in the Alliance office will work closely with Members, as well as with appropriate legal, public affairs and media relations advisors. In addition, the Alliance is forming a 12 to 15 member Expert Committee which will review all the necessary scientific data required for political, legal and legislative campaigns. Members of the Expert Committee will be fully acknowledged experts in their respective fields of complementary medicine, nutrition, toxicology, European and UK legislative and food and health law. Individuals or other groups who provide smaller donations to the ANH will also be invited to become Associate Members, although these will not have direct control over the Company.

How Much Money Does the Alliance Need to Raise?

In order to fund the fully independent legal and legislative feasibility study mentioned above, and to undertake the minimum necessary scientific advisory meetings, public affairs, media and administrative activity that such a course of action will entail, we need to raise £80,000 NOW. Putting it bluntly, without this funding the Alliance will not be able to pursue these important preparatory initiatives.

Once the feasibility study has been completed, which we anticipate will take 4 to 6 weeks, the Alliance will be able to clearly outline the most effective course of action and initiatives that need to be undertaken going forward. After careful and detailed analysis, a budget of at least £1,500,000 over two years will be required to run a properly resourced and professional campaign involving legal action. The budget will be somewhat less should legal action not be required. The budget will cover the cost of running a full time office and administration function, the NHA Expert Committee and the retention of high quality and professional legal, public affairs, marketing and media relations teams. It will also provide for the cost of all necessary collateral materials and the creation and running of a website.

One and a half million pounds is of course a lot of money, but when shared by all the businesses that would be negatively impacted by these directives it is a wholly affordable and realistic proposition, particularly when taking into account that the alternative will be to watch the EU legislate a large part of the natural products industry out of existence.

In Conclusion

If free access to food supplements and herbs in the UK is to be maintained, the industry needs to **speak with one voice** in order to have sufficient influence to effect change. The Alliance for Natural Health is the only fully independent organisation in the UK that exists to represent the interests of manufacturers, distributors, retailers, practitioners and consumers alike with a **sole** focus of addressing these directives using the best scientific, legal, public affairs and media relations available. It is not the Alliance's intention to replace in any way at all the good efforts of any of the existing organisations set up to represent the broader interests of those involved in the health food and supplements industry. The Alliance's function is to bring these groups together and to corral forces and efforts to ensure that these ill-considered directives are effectively and professionally opposed and that the interests of all who support the Alliance are wholly protected.

The Alliance has already been highly effective with its work in connection with the Food Supplements Directive and it pledges to deliver an even higher level of professionalism, expertise and commitment to fight for the interests of those who support it.

We will be contacting you over the next few days in order that we can arrange a meeting to discuss the possibility of your support and membership of the Alliance for Natural Health.

CONTACTS:

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THIS IS A CALL TO ACTION TO COMPANIES MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTING LEADING-EDGE, EFFECTIVE NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO:

- Stop possible bans on many widely used and safe nutrients
- Stop the imposition of unnecessary low limits on the potency of many vitamin products
- Maintain a comprehensive array of ingredients and nutrient forms for use in nutritional supplements
- Prevent the 'medicalisation' of herbal and nutrient-based supplements
- Work cooperatively with existing associations and groups to stop the collapse of manufacturers, health stores, distributors and other businesses as a result of unnecessarily restrictive European Commission legislation
- Help provide a legislative framework that supports innovation in complementary medicine and the nutritional supplement industry