

Vice-President Jyrki Katainen
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B – 1049 Brussels

Brussels, 8 May 2019

Subject: France to ban Titanium Dioxide as from January 2020

Dear Mr Katainen,

On behalf of EHPM, the European Federation of Health Product Manufacturers and SMEUnited, the Association of Crafts & SMEs in Europe, we would like to express our concerns about the recent French decree suspending the placing on the French market of Food products containing titanium dioxide (E171) as from January 1st 2020.

The unilateral decision of France to suspend the use of an additive authorized by Regulation (EC) 1333/2008 does not take into account evaluation of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which in 2016 re-evaluated the safety and concluded that it is neither genotoxic nor carcinogenic after ingestion. Additionally, last July, EFSA evaluated four new studies on the potential toxicity of E171 and concluded that these new studies do not modify the conclusions of the 2016 safety assessment.

We are particularly worried that by acting in this way a Member State could undermine the European Safety assessment procedure and EFSA's authority, putting at risk the credibility of the whole European Union structure. This will cause additional uncertainty for companies active in the food supplement sector, especially SMEs. Moreover, we fear that a domino effect may occur: if one Member state would be allowed to forbid unilaterally an authorized additive, it is likely that other Member States will follow, undermining the stability of the European internal market.

Titanium dioxide is one of the most common food additives used in food supplements to opacify capsules and tablets protecting their content against the intrusion of light and thus avoiding the degradation of its ingredients. Our members estimate that the economic impact of the French measure on the food supplement sector will be very important: 30% of the food supplements currently on the market in France and in Europe contain titanium dioxide. Their sales generate an annual revenue of €700 million in France and up to €3.48 billion¹ in the internal market.

Manufacturers have already started to reformulate their products, but many companies are not yet ready and the measure will have a huge economic impact on the European market. In addition to this cost, the cost of stock destruction is also to be added. Food supplements have indeed, on average, a best-before date of 3 years after their production and companies usually produce their products only once a year for the full year. Stocks are thus significant for distributors and manufacturers.

¹ Estimation of the value of the Food Supplement market by IQVIA, February 2019: 11,6 billion Euro

We would like to underline that the French measure has already impacted our sector because of the negative media coverage on titanium dioxide immediately impacting consumers' choices. That is why it is crucial to restore confidence in the European safety assessment system and to protect the stability of the European internal market.


We thank you for taking into consideration our concerns and for insisting to safeguard the EU safety assessment procedure.

We remain at your entire disposal for any further information you may need.

Yours sincerely,



Michel Horn
EHPM² Chair



Veronique Willems
SMEunited Secretary General

² The European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM) represents over 1,600 companies in food supplement sector. The value of the EU food supplement market is €13 billion and it employs well over 500,000 people directly and indirectly. Over 90% of the companies represented by EHPM are SMEs.