

PRESS RELEASE

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“CRITERIA TO QUALIFY A MICROORGANISM DESIGNATED AS ‘PROBIOTIC’ IN FOODS, BEVERAGES AND DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS”

IPA Europe contends that the development of scientifically-based criteria is prerequisite to qualifying a microbial strain as a "probiotic". In fact, the absence of formal criteria leaves the door wide open for misuse of the “probiotic” denomination and misinterpretation of the ‘probiotic’ concept, as is currently the case in the European Union.

Against this background, the probiotic sector proactively published in 2015 “Guidelines to qualify a microorganism to be termed as ‘probiotic’ in foods, beverages and supplements in commercial communications”, with the aim of setting reference criteria. These criteria have now been updated, as per the latest scientific developments and industry deliberations, and they will continue to be updated as best practices evolve.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (FAO/WHO) definition and guidelines maintain that strains of micro-organisms should be considered as probiotic if they are scientifically documented. IPA Europe also recommends that the probiotic status of strains must be documented by at least one supportive human clinical study according to generally accepted scientific standards.

The criteria recommend the use of the term “probiotic” to describe a microorganism only when a combination of four requirements is met: characterization of the species level and identification at strain level; must be safe for the intended use; the probiotic status should be scientifically documented, must be alive in the product and in a sufficient amount to achieve the desired effect up to the end of shelf-life and when consumed.

These criteria are designed to ensure that the probiotic foods industry can consistently create high-quality products that consumers can have confidence in.

IPA Europe supports and encourages responsible production and marketing of probiotic foods and food supplements. Therefore, IPA Europe will establish a list of probiotic strains used by IPA Europe members fulfilling all the criteria.

In developing this voluntary approach, the European probiotic industry shows that it is proactive and responsible when it comes to meaningful self-regulation.

While the criteria do not specifically address regulatory requirements outside of the EU, the scientific principles underlying the criteria to qualify a microorganism as “probiotic” could be applied to international regulatory paradigms.

The full text of the document can be found on the IPA Europe website: www.ipaeurope.org.

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ABOUT IPA EUROPE

IPA Europe is the European chapter of IPA, the International Probiotics Association; it was established in Brussels in 2015. The members of IPA Europe are companies directly engaged in the manufacture of probiotic cultures or probiotic foods, supplements, nutritionals or therapeutic products: BioGaia, Chr. Hansen, Danone, DuPont, IPA, Lallemand, Lesaffre, Probi and Yakult. The IPA Europe mission is: to gain acceptance of the term “probiotic” throughout Europe as a defined category and to create a favourable environment for probiotics in Europe. For additional information on IPA Europe’s activities see: <http://ipaeurope.org>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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