



THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

The Professional Association for Registered Dietitians
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M e d i a R e l e a s e

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For immediate release

New Law from Europe Set to Restrict Reliable Advice from Qualified Dietitians but Gives Celebrities a Free Rein

Despite obesity and poor nutrition being major health problems in the UK, registered dietitians may soon be stopped from providing advice to help people eat more healthily.

The European Regulation 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims, which applies from 1 July 2007, is set to restrict the legitimate activities of dietitians but encourage celebrity endorsement.

Registered dietitians currently work with the media and industry to make sure nutrition messages are accurate and based on science. They have an important role in preventing brands from making misleading or impractical claims. However, celebrities are not typically degree qualified in nutrition or bound by codes of professional practice, leaving consumers potentially open to inaccurate or overstated information about food and nutrition.

While the regulations relate to what can be said about foods in commercial communications, such as on food labels, advertising, websites, leaflets and radio interviews, it will cover generic foods as well as brands.

For example, if the regulations are applied to the letter qualified dietitians and nutritionists may soon not be able to:

- broadcast, or write in leaflets or websites, giving information about the potential health benefits of eating foods such as wholegrains, lean meat, fruit and vegetables
- provide general weight management meal plans, which mention any brands
- provide generic factual consumer information about preventing constipation, the role of fibre in the diet, and how to increase fibre intake, as part of a commercially-funded leaflet or website.
- say red meat is a source of iron as it doesn't meet the new criteria. This is despite the fact meat is one of the main providers of well-absorbed iron in the British diet and 40% of 19-34 year olds have dangerously low iron intakes.

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However celebrities would be able to use a list of approved EU health claims to promote food and drink products without being subject to any other restrictions.

Registered dietitian Dr Carrie Ruxton, representing leading freelance dietitians, said: “Dietitians do a great job with the media and industry to protect the public from misleading information, while at the same time giving them good reasons to eat a more healthy diet. I wouldn’t be motivated by someone simply telling me to “eat more fruit and veg because they are healthy foods”, which is about all the new regulations appear to allow us to do.”

Dr Frankie Phillips, dietitian and spokesperson for the BDA, added: “Dietitians are the trusted experts in nutrition and adhere to strict codes of practice stipulated by the Health Professions Council. It is totally inappropriate to limit dietitians’ ability to work with communications and PR companies and commercial organisations to give reliable and practical advice to the public, whilst unqualified celebrities continue to be able to give nutritional messages.”

The British Dietetic Association is keen to continue working with the Food Standards Agency, which is charged with interpreting the implementation of the EC regulation for use in the UK. This is to ensure that qualified dietitians can continue to communicate much needed, science-based and practical health information about foods and drinks, whether branded or unbranded, and consequently can best protect the public.

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Notes to Editors

1. Media enquiries to The British Dietetic Association and requests for interviews should be directed to 0870 580 2517 (9am – 5pm Mon – Fri) or to pr@bda.uk.com
2. Extract from:
REGULATION (EC) No 1924/2006 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 20 December 2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods
Article 12
The following health claims shall not be allowed:
12 (c) claims which make reference to recommendations of individual doctors or health professionals and other associations not referred to in Article 11.

Extract from:

EUROPEAN REGULATION (EC) NO 1924/2005 ON NUTRITION AND HEALTH CLAIMS MADE ON FOODS DRAFT FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY GUIDANCE TO COMPLIANCE. Was out for consultation, which closed 24 May 2007.

Final guidance is awaited. <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/nhcguideuk07.pdf> - page 33

15. Can I use a celebrity endorsement?

It is the Agency's view that in most cases this will be possible. However, where health claims are concerned, it will not be possible when the celebrity is a doctor or other health care professional as such recommendations are prohibited by Article 12.

16. Can I use advice from dietitians?

Not if the advice is in the form of a recommendation for a particular product within its labelling, advertising or promotion (Article 12).

17. Will the Regulation control advice given by doctors and dietitians to patients?

No. It will not cover verbal advice or advice to individual patients or other non-commercial communications (Recital paragraph 4).

2. The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with nearly 6,000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance.
3. Registered dietitians hold the only legally-recognisable graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the prevention of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence.

4. The British Dietetic Association has a website dedicated to promoting scientifically sound nutrition advice that everyone can trust, and provides a dedicated hot line just for journalists to speak to qualified dietitians and get to the real facts, avoiding misleading and potentially dangerous advice being given to the public.
5. Registration, awarded by the Health Professions Council, is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct.

For further details about The British Dietetic Association, please visit our websites: www.bda.uk.com, www.bdaweightwise.com , www.teenweightwise.com