

TACD

TRANS ATLANTIC
CONSUMER DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE TRANSATLANTIQUE
DES CONSOMMATEURS

DOC No. FOOD-14-00

DATE ISSUED: FEBRUARY, 2000

MISLEADING FOOD LABELING

The governments of the US and EU should take steps to improve the regulation of food labeling to provide consumers with more reliable and informative food labels and ensure that misleading claims stopped in one region of the world are not permitted to be made by the same company, or its subsidiary, in another region of the world. As consumers become increasingly reliant on food labels, every effort must be made by the US and EU, as well as by the food industry, to ensure that the information provided on food labels is honest, user-friendly, presented and used consistently, and not misleading.

To achieve this goal, the TACD recommends the following:

1. The EU should adopt rules for nutrition claims. This effort should include defining within legislation the conditions under which claims may be used on products. Rules for nutrition claims should be made consistent, where possible, between the EU and US.
2. Food labels should include a list of all ingredients, including those used in compound ingredients, to ensure that consumers have complete information about all of the ingredients used in a particular food.

Food labels should not highlight the presence of an ingredient unless the ingredient is present in an amount considered significant by the consumer. Food labels should not feature depictions of ingredients that are not present in the product, or present in the product in only trivial amounts. Food labels should include quantitative ingredient declarations and a consistent, comprehensive approach to their use should be adopted by the EU and US.

Specifically, labels should state the percentage of all major ingredients, i.e., those that comprise 5% or more of the total weight. If any ingredient appears in the name of the food or is highlighted on the label through words or pictures, the percentage of this ingredient should also be listed in immediate conjunction to such statements or pictures.

3. Meaningless terms that can mislead as to the quality of a food (including, for example, terms that imply slimming effects, "energy" claims, and/or the term "natural") should not be used unless they can be clearly defined and consistently used.