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Press Release

Food labels to provide enhanced information on vegetable oils and fats

Food labels bear more and more details about the nature of the vegetable oils and fats used as ingredient, whether this is oil from rapeseeds, sunflower seeds, palm fruits, soybeans or from other vegetable origin. With the entry into force of the Food Information to Consumers' Regulation on 13 December 2014, among the many changed labelling requirements, manufacturers are obliged to abandon the generic reference to "vegetable oils" or "vegetable fats" and replace it by a detailed list of oil plants used.

"While the new regulation will in some cases reduce flexibility for food manufacturers, it will also provide consumers with clearer, more transparent information on food products and is therefore a positive move", said Kevin Brassington, the President of FEDIOL.

The list of various oils appearing on labels now shows also, that in many cases manufacturers process oil blends and make full use of the very distinct fatty acid profiles and the different specifications of vegetable oils and fats to achieve the best nutritional performance for their products, while maintaining functional properties. Explanations by manufacturers in this sense help preventing or addressing questions from consumers, in particular when the oil used is not traditional in the country, which can be the case for seed oils as well as for tropical oils or fats.

FEDIOL regrets that some manufacturers and retailers opt for discriminating oils by using negative claims, as if this implied a better quality of the product. Considering that each a vegetable oil or fat can contribute to a balanced diet, such marketing approach is simply misleading. It is the overall fatty acid composition of the diet, which is relevant, not the consumption of one oil versus another.

end

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Background

- FEDIOL, the EU vegetable oil and proteinmeal industry association, represents the interests of the European seed and bean crushers, meal producers, vegetable oils producers, refiners and bottlers. FEDIOL's members are 12 national associations and associated company members in 5 other EU countries. With about 150 facilities in Europe, the sector provides 20,000 direct employments. Its members process approximately 36 million tonnes of basic products a year, both of EU origin and imported from third country markets. The sector processes notably rapeseed, sunflower seed, soybeans and linseed into oils and meals for food, feed, technical and energy uses essentially on the European market.
- Article 18 of the Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers in conjunction with Annex VII, determine new labelling provisions according to which
 - refined oils of vegetable origin – “May be grouped together in the list of ingredients under the designation ‘vegetable oils’ followed immediately by a list of indications of specific vegetable origin, and may be followed by the phrase ‘in varying proportions’. If grouped together, vegetable oils shall be included in the list of ingredients in accordance with Article 18(1), on the basis of the total weight of the vegetable oils present.
 - refined fats of vegetable origin “May be grouped together in the list of ingredients under the designation ‘vegetable fats’ followed immediately by a list of indications of specific vegetable origin, and may be followed by the phrase ‘in varying proportions’. If grouped together, vegetable fats shall be included in the list of ingredients in accordance with Article 18(1), on the basis of the total weight of the vegetable fats present.