Brain and Mood Support, p. 18

AGs Push For Supplements Regulations Reform
NY, IN—Two state attorneys general sent a letter to FDA urging for the reformation of its GMPs for supplements.

USDA Gives First Non-GMO Verification
Washington, D.C.—The USDA has verified its first non-GMO claim through its Process Verified Program.

WholeFoods Magazine Selects 2015 Retailer of the Year
South Plainfield, NJ—An independent retail store managed by a mother-son team is the 2015 Retailer of the Year.

Functional Foods, p. 14
Customer Service Tips, p. 27
Bone Flexibility, p. 28
Astraxanthin, p. 32
Company Profiles, p. 35
Urinary Health, p. 74
Two AGs Push For Reform on Supplement Industry Regulations

Only a few months after GNC made an agreement with New York Attorney General (AG) Eric T. Schneiderman to change its manufacturing process, Schneiderman and Indiana AG Greg Zoeller sent a letter to the Acting Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) urging for the reform of its Dietary Supplement Current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMPs).

"There’s no need to wait for Congressional action to drastically improve federal oversight of the dietary supplement industry," said Schneiderman in a statement. "The FDA has the authority to rewrite the rules that govern the multibillion-dollar dietary supplement industry today."

The letter sent to FDA singles out four "flaws" in the cGMPs:

- **Ingredient suppliers:** The guidelines do not cover ingredient suppliers, which may be located overseas; therefore, the letter asserts that some ingredients arrive at manufacturers untested and these firms cannot adequately detect frauds. This point was made in reaction to a citizen petition submitted by the Organic and Natural Health Association. Karen Howard, the group's CEO and executive director, stated that there are "many quality raw ingredient suppliers who already meet or exceed the FDA's cGMP standards." She adds that the problem is those that refuse to voluntarily adopt cGMPs, since they "compromise the integrity of their supply chains and create opportunity for a proliferation of substandard products in this highly price sensitive environment."

- **Testing of label claims:** Companies can choose their own testing methodology to confirm claims made on product labels, the AGs say. FDA has acknowledged that multiple tests would be ideal, but the current cGMPs make only one test mandatory.

- **Testing for allergens:** Products are not required to be tested for allergens even if the product is labeled to have none.

- **Labeling ambiguity:** There is no common definition for words commonly used on labels, such as "extract" or "natural."

While the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA) supports the AGs of New York and Indiana, the organization also shows some hesitance regarding the effect of the reform in today's market. "AHPA and its members support the New York and Indiana attorney general expressed call for more resources to strengthen enforcement of the numerous FDA regulations that govern the dietary supplement marketplace," AHPA president Michael McGuffin said in a statement. "But AHPA does not believe there would be any increased product quality or benefit to consumers to require ingredient companies to comply with the dietary supplement CGMP rule at this last date."

AHPA also makes the point that there are several inaccuracies in the letter. Regarding food allergen testing, for instance, the group says compliance with the "food allergen law is not voluntary but is compulsory. Compliant companies may not include undeclared or substitute ingredients or contaminants that would adulterate a supplement product, and must meet the same FDA standard for 'gluten-free' and major food allergen labeling as is required for conventional foods."

USDA Gives First Non-GMO Verification Through Process Verified Program

Washington, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has verified its first non-GMO claim through its Process Verified Program (PVP), with organic food company SunOpta's manufacturing facility.

In a letter to employees from Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, it was noted that while the PVP itself is new, this is the first claim of its kind to be verified through it. He added that other companies have taken interest in having their claims verified through the program. SunOpta CEO Steve Bromley was proud of the verification in an official announcement from the company, saying that this was "a great honor" and that the verification "ensures that our customers can be confident that they are getting the highest quality non-GMO soybeans and corn."

One thing that is important to realize is that the PVP being used for non-GMO verification does not mean that the USDA has set its own non-GMO standards. Instead, the program has the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) act as a third party in verifying marketing claims, according to a statement from Sam Jones-Ellard, a spokesperson for the AMS. Jones-Ellard also noted that while the USDA's organic certification process is also done through the AMS, the two programs will remain separate, meaning that even if a company is certified organic, it will have to go through a second process to have its non-GMO claims verified.

Some are concerned with this most recent development in non-GMO labeling, American Herbal Products Association President Michael McGuffin explained that USDA "should be commended for their effort to meet consumer demand for information about non-GMO products, but it seems unlikely that the PVP will provide the comprehensive solution needed to address this issue." One potential issue he mentioned was that the program does not appear to be coordinated with the National Organic Program (NOP). He believes that products that meet NOP standards should have their claims recognized as verified, "instead of having to pay an additional fee for a claim that has already been verified by AMS through NOP."

AHPA previously submitted comments to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) indicating shoppers have a right to know what's in their food. The group feels that creating a federal regulation for voluntary disclosing non-GMO ingredients is the best way to go. AHPA says voluntary labeling, such as that used for organic products, has been very successful and "a similar approach to labeling foods that meet a federally-defined standard as 'non-GMO' would meet consumer demand to be able to ensure that the products they actually use are free of GMO ingredients.

In addition, AHPA believes more can be done to mitigate the risk of gene drift, whereby a genetically engineered seed carries through water or wind and cross-pollinates with non-GMO crops.