

Rationale and Benefits of the CRN Voluntary Monograph on Long Chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA

A new voluntary monograph has been developed on long chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA under the auspices of the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN). The purpose of this monograph on analytical methods, quality standards and purity standards for long chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA, is to improve trade and consumer acceptance of these important beneficial dietary ingredients. The monograph ensures quality by establishing oxidation limits and ensures purity by establishing stringent limits on environmental contaminants. These strict standards, adopted early on in the production process by raw material suppliers, will benefit the dietary supplement industry, the functional food industry and ultimately the consumer.

Currently, there are multiple validated methods used by companies for reporting results of long chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA content, quality and purity. Since results may vary based on the methods used, current product labeling is inconsistent. This has created product confusion and mistrust in the marketplace. The need for a “uniform standard” of analysis, quality and purity by which all reputable long chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA products are measured is needed to regain and maintain industry-wide consumer confidence in these products.

Media coverage of increasing environmental contaminants in food and supplement products has driven consumers to use greater caution in purchasing products, especially marine or fish products. This monograph sets forth standards and methods that are reliable and that will enable qualified laboratories to accurately report ingredient contents and quality. These methods will demonstrate analytical purity and quality of products and will stringently limit environmental contaminants. The limits set forth in the monograph are consistent with current or emerging European standards and with limits established under California’s Proposition 65. This monograph establishes an industry acceptable minimum level of quality and purity from appropriately sourced and processed long chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA.

The monograph applies to bulk oil and encapsulated long chain Omega-3 EPA and DHA at the time of manufacture and throughout the shelf-life of the product. Compliance with the monograph will provide consumers with a simple and uniform measurement of Omega-3 EPA and DHA content that will guarantee at least 100% of the stated label content claim over the lifetime of the product in mg/gm. The amount of EPA and DHA will be clearly specified and easy to apply to dietary recommendations.

The CRN Omega-3 Working Group is urging the incorporation of this voluntary monograph in applicable national and international standards including those established by the U.S. Pharmacopeia, American Oil Chemists Society, and Association of Official Analytical Chemists.