

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Judy Blatman at 202-204-7962

**CRN ISSUES WHITE PAPER ON THE IMPORTANCE
OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS FOR HEART HEALTH
—Evidence is Strongest for EPA and DHA—**

WASHINGTON, D.C., *July 20, 2005* – The Council for Responsible Nutrition’s (CRN) Omega-3 Working Group (O3WG) today released a white paper highlighting the importance of omega-3 fatty acids, especially EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), for heart health.

Ian Newton, executive director, CRN O3WG, stated, “As scientific research builds for the benefit for marine-based omega-3s (EPA and DHA) and consumer interest in these products continues to grow, it is important to educate various audiences on the benefits obtained from the different types of omega-3 fatty acids. The CRN O3WG white paper helps clarify some of the differences.”

Two government agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), along with the American Heart Association (AHA), have independently reviewed the available evidence and all have reached a similar conclusion: when it comes to omega-3s and heart health, the evidence is strongest for EPA and DHA.

FDA has permitted use of a qualified health claim for dietary supplements and conventional foods containing EPA and DHA, stating, “Supportive but not conclusive research shows that consumption of EPA and DHA omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.” This health claim does not apply to omega-3 derived from plants such as flax or canola.

AHRQ, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, reviewed the evidence on omega-3s and cardiovascular disease in 2004 and concluded that omega-3 fatty acids help reduce the risk of having a heart attack or dying from heart disease. AHRQ noted that “the evidence is

strongest for fish or fish oil,” which are the primary sources of EPA and DHA.

Another omega-3 fatty acid, alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) cannot be synthesized by the body and is therefore an essential fatty acid that must be obtained from the diet. Dietary ALA sources include grains, nuts, and plant oils such as canola and flax seed. In the body, there is limited conversion of ALA to EPA and DHA. Therefore, to assist in maintaining a healthy heart and reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, it is critical to obtain EPA and DHA directly from the diet, which means primarily from fatty fish (such as anchovies, sardines and salmon), from dietary supplements containing fish oils or algal oils, or from traditional foods fortified with EPA and DHA.

A number of other countries have established dietary recommendations of 0.3 to 0.5 grams per day for EPA plus DHA. The American Heart Association and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans both recommend two meals of fatty fish per week for heart health, and this would equate to about 0.5 grams per day of EPA and DHA combined. Since most North Americans eat very little fish and consume, on average, less than 0.1 grams of EPA and DHA per day, there is a need to take dietary supplements or foods fortified with EPA and DHA to help fill this nutritional gap. A copy of the CRN O3WG white paper, titled “Omega-3 Fatty Acids in Human Health: The Role of Eicosapentaenoic, Docosahexaenoic, and Alpha-Linolenic Acids in Heart Health,” is available at http://www.crnusa.org/pdfs/CRNo3wg_whitepaper.pdf.

###

The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN) is one of the dietary supplement industry’s leading trade associations. The CRN Omega-3 Working Group (CRN O3WG) consists of representatives from 22 fish and algal-based omega-3 ingredient suppliers and finished product manufacturers. The CRN O3WG was formed to ensure the highest standards are available for product quality and safety from manufacturers and marketers. The group also provides scientific information about the significant health benefits of marine based omega-3 EPA and DHA to ensure greater trade and consumer confidence in these beneficial nutrients.

Note to Editor: To arrange an interview with Ian Newton or CRN’s Andrew Shao, Ph.D., contact Judy Blatman at 202-204-7962.