

## Walnuts – proven health benefits in a nutshell

### Health Claims accepted and published by the European Union

**May 30, 2012, Frankfurt** - Benefits of walnuts related to maintenance of cardiovascular health have now been officially acknowledged by the European Union. California Walnuts are the first and only nut entitled to bear several of the 222 health claims that were published in the Official Journal of the EU<sup>1</sup>.

“Walnuts contribute to the improvement of the elasticity of the blood vessels” is the first and foremost claim and unique to walnuts. It may be used only for food which provides a daily intake of 30 g of walnuts – this is approximately a handful. The elasticity of the blood vessels is relevant for the blood flow and function of the blood vessels, which is one factor of cardiovascular health.

Moreover California walnuts have a good fatty acid profile: They primarily contain polyunsaturated fatty acids (14,2 g of 20 g total fat in one 30 g portion) plus 2.7 g monounsaturated fatty acids. With 2,7 g per 30 g portion walnuts are especially rich in alpha-linolenic acid. In fact they are the only nut with a significant portion. Alpha-linolenic acid is an essential Omega-3 fatty acid, that the body does not produce which thus must be obtained from the food you eat. Based on their fatty acid profile walnuts are eligible for three different health claims related to cholesterol, which again is one factor of cardiovascular health.

- “Alpha-linolenic acid contributes to the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels.”
- “Replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats in the diet contributes to the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels.” [MUFA and PUFA are unsaturated fats]
- “Linoleic acid contributes to the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels.”

The latter claims are approved for food products that meet the respective fatty acid composition requirements. For example in order to bear the ALA claim, a food product must contain at least 15% of daily intake of 2 grams of ALA per portion. However, the thresholds for the nutrient profiles are forthcoming by the EU. This may further limit products entitled to bear a claim. The next months will show how these will be realized by the different market players and in the different languages. The regulation requires various additional information to be published on the packaging jointly with a health claim. Legal council should be sought as to the exact wording and design of the label to ensure that all requirements are met.

“It is good to see that those health benefits specific to walnuts are now also officially accepted in the EU. We in the scientific community continue to research the health benefits of fatty and amino acids as well as nutrients pertinent to walnuts”, states Emilio Ros, MD, PhD., Lipid Clínic of Hospital Clínic, University of Barcelona, on the publication of the Health Claims. “With over seventy-five published studies to date and an additional thirty projects

<sup>1</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, L 136, Volume 55, May 25 2012 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ%3AL%3A2012%3A136%3ASOM%3ADE%3AHTML>)

ongoing, the CWC remains committed to exploring walnuts role in the diet,” says Dennis A. Balint CEO California Walnut Commission. And adds: “Besides, incorporating walnuts into meals is a simple and convenient way to add variety and taste.”

To find more ways to add walnuts to the diet, consumers can visit [www.walnuss.de](http://www.walnuss.de) or <http://www.nuecesdecalfornia.com> for recipes, snacking ideas and much more.