



EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA); Scientific Opinion on the substantiation of health claims related to ribose and faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise (ID 4226) pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006

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SCIENTIFIC OPINION

Scientific Opinion on the substantiation of health claims related to ribose and faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise (ID 4226) pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006¹

EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA)^{2, 3}

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Parma, Italy

SUMMARY

Following a request from the European Commission, the Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies was asked to provide a scientific opinion on a list of health claims pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006. This opinion addresses the scientific substantiation of health claims in relation to ribose and faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise. The scientific substantiation is based on the information provided by the Member States in the consolidated list of Article 13 health claims and references that EFSA has received from Member States or directly from stakeholders.

The food that is the subject of the health claim is ribose. The Panel considers that ribose is sufficiently characterised.

The claimed effect is “maintenance of ATP levels, exercise performance, exercise recovery”. The target population is assumed to be adults performing strenuous exercise. In the context of the proposed wordings, conditions of use and references provided, the Panel assumes that the claimed effect refers to recovery from muscle fatigue after the performance of physical exercise. The Panel considers that faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise is a beneficial physiological effect.

In weighing the evidence, the Panel took into account that the one human intervention study provided from which conclusions could be drawn for the scientific substantiation of the claim showed no effect of ribose, compared to placebo, on exercise performance during an exercise test conducted after intense intermittent training.

On the basis of the data presented, the Panel concludes that a cause and effect relationship has not been established between the consumption of ribose and faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise.

¹ On request from the European Commission, Question No EFSA-Q-2008-4936, adopted on 08 April 2011.

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KEY WORDS

Ribose, recovery, muscle, exercise, health claims.

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INFORMATION AS PROVIDED IN THE CONSOLIDATED LIST

The consolidated list of health claims pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006⁴ submitted by Member States contains main entry claims with corresponding conditions of use and literature for similar health claims. EFSA has screened all health claims contained in the original consolidated list of Article 13 health claims which was received by EFSA in 2008 using six criteria established by the NDA Panel to identify claims for which EFSA considered sufficient information had been provided for evaluation and those for which more information or clarification was needed before evaluation could be carried out⁵. The clarifications which were received by EFSA through the screening process have been included in the consolidated list. This additional information will serve as clarification to the originally provided information. The information provided in the consolidated list for the health claims which are the subject of this opinion is tabulated in Appendix C.

ASSESSMENT

1. Characterisation of the food/constituent (ID 4226)

The food constituent that is the subject of the health claim is ribose.

Ribose is a pentose sugar (C₅H₁₀O₅) occurring as a component of nucleic acids, nucleotides such as adenosine triphosphate (ATP), and other compounds that are critical to metabolism. Ribose is measurable in foods by established methods.

The Panel considers that the food constituent, ribose, which is the subject of the health claim, is sufficiently characterised.

2. Relevance of the claimed effect to human health (ID 4226)

The claimed effect is “maintenance of ATP levels, exercise performance, exercise recovery”. The Panel assumes that the target population is adults performing strenuous exercise.

In the context of the proposed wordings, conditions of use and references provided, the Panel assumes that the claimed effect refers to recovery from muscle fatigue after the performance of physical exercise.

Fatigue can be defined as the loss of peak force or power output. Therefore, muscle fatigue recovery can be defined as the regaining of maximal muscle strength or muscle power after strenuous exercise which has induced muscle fatigue. The regaining of muscle strength/power may be beneficial during everyday life activities, and is beneficial for athletic performance in disciplines where loss of muscle strength and power reduces performance.

The Panel considers that faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise is a beneficial physiological effect.

3. Scientific substantiation of the claimed effect (ID 4226)

The references provided for the substantiation of the claim included two textbook chapters and one narrative review which did not provide original data for the scientific substantiation of the claim, and a number of human intervention studies which were available in abstract form only and did not

⁴ Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods. OJ L 404, 30.12.2006, p. 9–25.

⁵ EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA), 2011. General guidance for stakeholders on the evaluation of Article 13.1, 13.5 and 14 health claims. EFSA Journal, 9(4):2135, 24 pp.

include sufficient details for a full scientific evaluation. The Panel considers that no conclusions can be drawn from these references for the scientific substantiation of the claim.

In a double-blind, cross-over, placebo-controlled human intervention study, Hellsten et al. (2004) investigated the effect of ribose supplementation on the re-synthesis of adenine nucleotides and on exercise performance after intense intermittent training in humans. Eight males participated in two identical seven-day training protocols (cycling, two training sessions per day, five to seven hours apart) on two occasions, five to nine weeks apart. Each training session consisted of 10 min of warming up at an intensity of 65 % followed by a three-minute rest period, and then 15 10-second maximal exercise bouts separated by a 50-second rest period. The last training session was followed by an oral intake of nine ribose supplements (each containing 200 mg/kg body weight of ribose and 200 mg/kg body weight of sucrose) or nine placebo supplements (each containing 200 mg/kg body weight of sucrose and 200 mg/kg body weight of maltodextrin). The first supplementation was consumed 10 min after the last training session and thereafter at each main meal (breakfast, lunch and dinner) for three days, with the last supplement being consumed approximately 60 h after the last training session. The subjects repeated the exercise protocol 72 h after the last training session (72 h test). Power output expressed per second was recorded throughout the exercise test, and subsequently the peak power output and the total work performed in each exercise bout were calculated. Mean and peak power output during the exercise tests were not significantly different after consumption of ribose compared to placebo.

A number of animal and *in vitro* studies were also provided. The Panel considers that evidence provided in animal and *in vitro* studies is not sufficient to predict the occurrence of an effect of ribose consumption on faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise *in vivo* in humans.

In weighing the evidence, the Panel took into account that the one human intervention study provided from which conclusions could be drawn for the scientific substantiation of the claim showed no effect of ribose, compared to placebo, on exercise performance during an exercise test conducted after intense intermittent training.

The Panel concludes that a cause and effect relationship has not been established between the consumption of ribose and faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the data presented, the Panel concludes that:

- The food constituent, ribose, which is the subject of the health claims, is sufficiently characterised.
- The claimed effect is “maintenance of ATP levels, exercise performance, exercise recovery”. The target population is assumed to be adults performing strenuous exercise. In the context of the proposed wordings, conditions of use and references provided, it is assumed that the claimed effect refers to recovery from muscle fatigue after the performance of physical exercise. Faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise is a beneficial physiological effect.
- A cause and effect relationship has not been established between the consumption of ribose and faster recovery from muscle fatigue after exercise.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED TO EFSA

Health claims pursuant to Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 (No: EFSA-Q-2008-4936). The scientific substantiation is based on the information provided by the Member States in the

consolidated list of Article 13 health claims and references that EFSA has received from Member States or directly from stakeholders.

The full list of supporting references as provided to EFSA is available on: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/panels/nda/claims/article13.htm>.

REFERENCES

Hellsten Y, Skadhauge L and Bangsbo J, 2004. Effect of ribose supplementation on resynthesis of adenine nucleotides after intense intermittent training in humans. *American Journal of Physiology. Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology*, 286, R182-188.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

BACKGROUND AND TERMS OF REFERENCE AS PROVIDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Regulation 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods⁶ (hereinafter "the Regulation") entered into force on 19th January 2007.

Article 13 of the Regulation foresees that the Commission shall adopt a Community list of permitted health claims other than those referring to the reduction of disease risk and to children's development and health. This Community list shall be adopted through the Regulatory Committee procedure and following consultation of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Health claims are defined as "any claim that states, suggests or implies that a relationship exists between a food category, a food or one of its constituents and health".

In accordance with Article 13 (1) health claims other than those referring to the reduction of disease risk and to children's development and health are health claims describing or referring to:

- a) the role of a nutrient or other substance in growth, development and the functions of the body; or
- b) psychological and behavioural functions; or
- c) without prejudice to Directive 96/8/EC, slimming or weight-control or a reduction in the sense of hunger or an increase in the sense of satiety or to the reduction of the available energy from the diet.

To be included in the Community list of permitted health claims, the claims shall be:

- (i) based on generally accepted scientific evidence; and
- (ii) well understood by the average consumer.

Member States provided the Commission with lists of claims as referred to in Article 13 (1) by 31 January 2008 accompanied by the conditions applying to them and by references to the relevant scientific justification. These lists have been consolidated into the list which forms the basis for the EFSA consultation in accordance with Article 13 (3).

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED

IMPORTANCE AND PERTINENCE OF THE FOOD⁷

Foods are commonly involved in many different functions⁸ of the body, and for one single food many health claims may therefore be scientifically true. Therefore, the relative importance of food e.g. nutrients in relation to other nutrients for the expressed beneficial effect should be considered: for functions affected by a large number of dietary factors it should be considered whether a reference to a single food is scientifically pertinent.

⁶ OJ L12, 18/01/2007

⁷ The term 'food' when used in this Terms of Reference refers to a food constituent, the food or the food category.

⁸ The term 'function' when used in this Terms of Reference refers to health claims in Article 13(1)(a), (b) and (c).

It should also be considered if the information on the characteristics of the food contains aspects pertinent to the beneficial effect.

SUBSTANTIATION OF CLAIMS BY GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

Scientific substantiation is the main aspect to be taken into account to authorise health claims. Claims should be scientifically substantiated by taking into account the totality of the available scientific data, and by weighing the evidence, and shall demonstrate the extent to which:

- (a) the claimed effect of the food is beneficial for human health,
- (b) a cause and effect relationship is established between consumption of the food and the claimed effect in humans (such as: the strength, consistency, specificity, dose-response, and biological plausibility of the relationship),
- (c) the quantity of the food and pattern of consumption required to obtain the claimed effect could reasonably be achieved as part of a balanced diet,
- (d) the specific study group(s) in which the evidence was obtained is representative of the target population for which the claim is intended.

EFSA has mentioned in its scientific and technical guidance for the preparation and presentation of the application for authorisation of health claims consistent criteria for the potential sources of scientific data. Such sources may not be available for all health claims. Nevertheless it will be relevant and important that EFSA comments on the availability and quality of such data in order to allow the regulator to judge and make a risk management decision about the acceptability of health claims included in the submitted list.

The scientific evidence about the role of a food on a nutritional or physiological function is not enough to justify the claim. The beneficial effect of the dietary intake has also to be demonstrated. Moreover, the beneficial effect should be significant i.e. satisfactorily demonstrate to beneficially affect identified functions in the body in a way which is relevant to health. Although an appreciation of the beneficial effect in relation to the nutritional status of the European population may be of interest, the presence or absence of the actual need for a nutrient or other substance with nutritional or physiological effect for that population should not, however, condition such considerations.

Different types of effects can be claimed. Claims referring to the maintenance of a function may be distinct from claims referring to the improvement of a function. EFSA may wish to comment whether such different claims comply with the criteria laid down in the Regulation.

WORDING OF HEALTH CLAIMS

Scientific substantiation of health claims is the main aspect on which EFSA's opinion is requested. However, the wording of health claims should also be commented by EFSA in its opinion.

There is potentially a plethora of expressions that may be used to convey the relationship between the food and the function. This may be due to commercial practices, consumer perception and linguistic or cultural differences across the EU. Nevertheless, the wording used to make health claims should be truthful, clear, reliable and useful to the consumer in choosing a healthy diet.

In addition to fulfilling the general principles and conditions of the Regulation laid down in Article 3 and 5, Article 13(1)(a) stipulates that health claims shall describe or refer to "the role of a nutrient or other substance in growth, development and the functions of the body". Therefore, the requirement to

describe or refer to the 'role' of a nutrient or substance in growth, development and the functions of the body should be carefully considered.

The specificity of the wording is very important. Health claims such as "Substance X supports the function of the joints" may not sufficiently do so, whereas a claim such as "Substance X helps maintain the flexibility of the joints" would. In the first example of a claim it is unclear which of the various functions of the joints is described or referred to contrary to the latter example which specifies this by using the word "flexibility".

The clarity of the wording is very important. The guiding principle should be that the description or reference to the role of the nutrient or other substance shall be clear and unambiguous and therefore be specified to the extent possible i.e. descriptive words/ terms which can have multiple meanings should be avoided. To this end, wordings like "strengthens your natural defences" or "contain antioxidants" should be considered as well as "may" or "might" as opposed to words like "contributes", "aids" or "helps".

In addition, for functions affected by a large number of dietary factors it should be considered whether wordings such as "indispensable", "necessary", "essential" and "important" reflects the strength of the scientific evidence.

Similar alternative wordings as mentioned above are used for claims relating to different relationships between the various foods and health. It is not the intention of the regulator to adopt a detailed and rigid list of claims where all possible wordings for the different claims are approved. Therefore, it is not required that EFSA comments on each individual wording for each claim unless the wording is strictly pertinent to a specific claim. It would be appreciated though that EFSA may consider and comment generally on such elements relating to wording to ensure the compliance with the criteria laid down in the Regulation.

In doing so the explanation provided for in recital 16 of the Regulation on the notion of the average consumer should be recalled. In addition, such assessment should take into account the particular perspective and/or knowledge in the target group of the claim, if such is indicated or implied.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

HEALTH CLAIMS OTHER THAN THOSE REFERRING TO THE REDUCTION OF DISEASE RISK AND TO CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

EFSA should in particular consider, and provide advice on the following aspects:

- Whether adequate information is provided on the characteristics of the food pertinent to the beneficial effect.
- Whether the beneficial effect of the food on the function is substantiated by generally accepted scientific evidence by taking into account the totality of the available scientific data, and by weighing the evidence. In this context EFSA is invited to comment on the nature and quality of the totality of the evidence provided according to consistent criteria.
- The specific importance of the food for the claimed effect. For functions affected by a large number of dietary factors whether a reference to a single food is scientifically pertinent.

In addition, EFSA should consider the claimed effect on the function, and provide advice on the extent to which:

- the claimed effect of the food in the identified function is beneficial.
- a cause and effect relationship has been established between consumption of the food and the claimed effect in humans and whether the magnitude of the effect is related to the quantity consumed.

- where appropriate, the effect on the function is significant in relation to the quantity of the food proposed to be consumed and if this quantity could reasonably be consumed as part of a balanced diet.
- the specific study group(s) in which the evidence was obtained is representative of the target population for which the claim is intended.
- the wordings used to express the claimed effect reflect the scientific evidence and complies with the criteria laid down in the Regulation.

When considering these elements EFSA should also provide advice, when appropriate:

- on the appropriate application of Article 10 (2) (c) and (d) in the Regulation, which provides for additional labelling requirements addressed to persons who should avoid using the food; and/or warnings for products that are likely to present a health risk if consumed to excess.

APPENDIX B

EFSA DISCLAIMER

The present opinion does not constitute, and cannot be construed as, an authorisation to the marketing of the food/food constituent, a positive assessment of its safety, nor a decision on whether the food/food constituent is, or is not, classified as foodstuffs. It should be noted that such an assessment is not foreseen in the framework of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006.

It should also be highlighted that the scope, the proposed wordings of the claims and the conditions of use as proposed in the Consolidated List may be subject to changes, pending the outcome of the authorisation procedure foreseen in Article 13(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006.

APPENDIX C

Table 1. Main entry health claims related to ribose including conditions of use from similar claims, as proposed in the Consolidated List.

ID	Food or Food component	Health Relationship	Proposed wording
4226	Ribose	Maintenance of ATP levels, exercise performance, exercise recovery	<p>ATP is used for energy by muscle cells. Ribose helps regenerate muscle ATP levels, thereby improving exercise performance and recovery”</p> <p>“Ribose helps maintain cellular energy”</p> <p>“Ribose enhances recovery after strenuous activity”</p> <p>“Ribose is an important building block for cellular energy”</p>
<p>Conditions of use</p> <p>The minimum effective dose is estimated to be 10 g/day. To carry the claim, a product should contain at least 15% of this dose (i.e., 1.5 g) per 100 g, 100 mL or 100 kcal. Study durations ranged from single administrations to 4 weeks; thus, supplementation with ribose either acutely (prior to or during exercise) or chronically appears to be efficacious.</p>			

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATP Adenosine triphosphate