# Supplemental Hope:
# Codex Alimentarium, "Big Pharma," and a Surprising Turn of Events

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If you've flipped through this magazine or have recently visited just about any internet site related to natural health and wellness, you've heard about the dreaded *Codex Alimentarius*, a proposed universal food code and possible threat to our continued access to nutritional supplements in the United States. Though it originated in Germany and is working its way through the European Courts of Justice (ECJ), whether or not it passes as law there will have consequences here in the United States.

In general, Codex Alimentarius is an international code of food standards developed by a Commission under the United Nations through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). If the European Union accepts Codex Alimentarius, the United States may be forced to comply due to the threat of crippling trade sanctions that can be enforced by the WHO, of which the United States is a member. Compliance with Codex would result in the imposition of international standards on the sale of dietary supplements here and force us into harmonization with France and Germany's restrictive vitamin rules, which limit access to information on health choices and restrict the right to obtain high-potency vitamins without a written prescription.

**How to Do Your Part**

Want to get involved and help keep the Codex from crushing our freedom to choose and use supplements? Here are a few links that will be useful to you:

http://www.friendsoffreedom.org/action.php?op=ActionLetter2
http://www.alliance-natural-health.org/
http://www.thenhf.com/codex_30.htm
http://www.conservatives.com/vitamins/e-petition.cfm
http://www.laleva.cc/petizione/english/intro_eng.html

Unsurprisingly, there has been a worldwide resistance to Codex as natural health practitioners and the general population alike have figured out what is really at stake. Articles like this one have been written to inform the public and letters and e-mails have been sent by the thousands to government officials, all in an effort to stop this freedom-crushing behemoth in its tracks. It is an uphill battle, however, as the pharmaceutical industry (a.k.a. "Big Pharma") stands poised to rake in the benefits of a Codex victory. And as just about anyone knows, when Big Pharma wants something badly enough, it plays the money game until it gets it.

Need an example? Well, see if you can spot the crookedness in this: While more than 100,000 people in the United States die each year from adverse drug reactions (from medications which are prescribed for them by trained doctors) and less than 40 die each year from the use of nutritional and herbal supplements (which people obtain and use on their own), Big Pharma, the

FDA and the Western medical establishment want us to believe that under current legislation supplements and herbs – not drugs – represent a major source of harm to the public![1] As a result, support for the Codex and the supplement regulations and restrictions it calls for is freely flowing from the drug industry. If that sounds ridiculous to you, you're not alone.

Some governmental bodies are starting to recognize what is really going on and their responses are surprisingly favorable. For example, the United Kingdom Parliament's Select Committee on Health, fully aware that the pharmaceutical industry is the third most profitable economic activity within the UK, just released a significantly clear-seeing report that suggests:[2]

1. The pharmaceutical industry has conducted clinical trials that were not adequately designed; they could be designed to show a new drug in the best light and sometimes fail to indicate the true effects of a medicine on health outcomes relevant to the patient;
2. The pharmaceutical industry has actively suppressed trial results. Suppression of negative clinical trial findings leads to a body of evidence that does not reflect the true risk/benefit profile of the medicine in question;
3. The pharmaceutical industry acts like a giant drug-pusher. Once licensed, medicines are intensely promoted to prescribers. Coupled with company-sponsored information from medical journals and supplements, "medical education" materials, advertisements and sponsorship to attend conferences, workshops and other events, it is little wonder that prescribing practices are affected. General Practitioners are particular targets as are the patients themselves through mass media advertising.
4. Overall, there is a problem with the increased "medicalization" of society;
5. The belief that every problem may be solved with medication seems particularly relevant in the context of antidepressants and that while it is acceptable that antidepressants can be effective medicines and have been successfully used by many patients, unhappiness is part of the spectrum of human experience, not a medical condition that warrants medicating; and
6. This trend has certainly been encouraged by the pharmaceutical industry. The industry has acted, in the words of some witnesses, as a "disease-monger," with the aim of categorizing an increasing number of individuals as "abnormal" and thereby requiring drug treatment. This process has led to an unhealthy over-reliance on, and an over-use of, medicines. It also diverts resources and priorities from more significant diseases and health problems.

These striking statements (which, by the way, natural and holistic health practitioners have been suggesting for years), lead to even more outstanding recommendations made by the same governing body. There were forty-eight recommendations in all which, if actualized and fully-enforced, would shut down Big Pharma's pervasive influence and control, and provide attention to non-drug therapies. Among many others, some of the most salient recommendations include:[3]

1. Removal of most drug advertising;
2. Tighter monitoring of drugs before and after launch;
3. Government funding for non-drug alternatives;
4. Monitoring of funding of "patient" groups;

5. Training in medical schools on how to evaluate drugs versus non-drug therapies

Perhaps most telling, the House of Commons has even recommended that, because the UK's Department of Health seems unable to prioritize the interests of people's health over the pharmaceutical industry's profit margins, *sponsorship of the industry should pass from the Department of Health to the Department of Trade and Industry*. This is hugely revealing: If the United Kingdom is ready to acknowledge that Big Pharma is more interested in money than health, isn't it time the United States admitted the same?

We shall strive for that day! In the meantime, while this most recent turn of events gives us all a bit of hope, we need to continue to be vigilant where this issue is concerned, recognizing that the conflict over supplements is far from ended. Still, this demonstrates the growing possibility that consumers will continue to be able to freely use the supplements they believe are beneficial to their health. To that end, let us work together.

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[1] http://www.thenhf.com/articles_27.htm
[2] http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmhealth/42/4203.htm
[3] http://www.quackpotwatch.org/opinionpieces/UK%20Parliament%20SMASHES%20Big%20Pharma.htm