GERMANY, UK — Efforts within the global Codex Alimentarius Commission of the United Nations to further restrict access to vitamins and other natural dietary substances have been blocked once again, even though in Europe the equally dangerous “directives” of the European Union relating to foods and supplements continue unabated — actions, many believe, aimed at putting the supplements industry essentially out of business while leaving the field open to synthetic drugs.

The 24th session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission on Nutrition and Foods For Special Dietary Uses (CACNFSDU), meeting in Berlin Nov. 4-8, allotted a scant 90 minutes to discussion of the key issues — limiting supplements potencies and placing them under rigid controls such as those already in place for drugs, whose manufacturers can pay for the expensive process — and in the end voted to keep the issue at “stage 3” of an 8-stage process after which the UN-aligned group would attempt to make such controls into international law.

South African Codex delegate Antoinette Booyzen was the heroine at the recent meeting, observers told ICHF, since she, as a recipient of the benefits of dietary supplements herself, vainly sought to propose a new Codex preamble recognizing such supplements as important in preventing and reducing the risk of disease.

Codex, while presented as an unbiased international consultative group, essentially reflects the interests of the international processed-foods and synthetic drug industries, health-freedom proponents have long argued.

ICHF adviser Dr. Josef Hasslberger, a veteran Codex watcher, reported that two days before the session began Dr. Matthias Rath’s foundation organized a conference attended by 2,500 people where the scientific merits of using vitamin and related dietary supplements over synthetic drugs were presented.

“The studies and the personal successes of people taking vitamin supplements on the advice of Dr. Rath prove the overwhelming importance of changing from a pharmaceutical and symptom-based approach to illness to a nutrition-based, cellular-level approach. Perhaps more importantly, Rath’s conference brought together a group of representatives of organizations from several countries, all concerned with preserving freedom of choice for natural methods of prevention and cure,” Dr. Hasslberger reported.

“Two days later, on the moring that saw the beginning of the official Codex conclave, many of the participants in the Rath event were demonstrating outside the gates of the building hosting the meeting, loudly demanding that their health choices be respected.

“Meanwhile, delegates from about 50 of the Codex member countries started to deliberate standards for baby foods. Agreement on this issue was as elusive as it has been for years, maybe more so now than ever. The greater issue of globalization can be observed neatly compressed into the Codex ‘microcosm’ for everyone to see.

“Multinational pharmaceutical and food industries, with the backing of a number of industrialized countries, try to pave the way for the global free sale of their products. This is greatly resisted by most of the developing countries and by consumer advocates who believe that babies are best fed on mother’s milk.

“Developing nations believe that they should not be forced by an international standard-setting body to accept baby foods which are too expensive for most of their starving population and which, from a nutritional point of view, are admittedly inferior to “the real stuff.”’

“Continued Dr. Hasslberger:

“Days of deliberations brought little visible progress. Towards the end of the three-day conclave the subject of food supplements was once again on the agenda. Although the issue of supplements is in many ways quite different from that of baby foods, the same worries prevail with developing nations. They see vitamin and mineral supplements as another ‘blessing’ to be bestowed on them by the same hated multinationals, the giant global pharmaceutical and food industries . . .

“The proposal for a guideline on vitamin and mineral supplements, first made in 1994 by the German Codex delegation, seeks to extend the philosophy of control, so prevalent in that nation and in much of the rest of continental Europe, to the whole world. The draft proposes to set strict limits on the composition and potency of these extra nutritional foods, relegating everything exceeding ‘nutritionally necessary’ dosages to the world of medicine, a world which today is clearly dominated by pharmaceutical interests . . .

“When discussing the preamble of the draft guideline, remarkably, the South African delegate strongly stood up for the free availability of supplements, to the extent of lambasting the participants for what she called a ‘hypocritical’ approach to health and even a ‘return to the dark ages.’ In the face of scientific data indicating that supplementation is potentially life saving, Ms. Booyzen said, Codex should not be thinking of putting limits on safe products such as vitamin and mineral supplements.

“She suggested, quoting scientific studies, that supplements might be useful to prevent many of the diseases of civilization, the so-called degenerative diseases which are due to sub-optimum supplies of certain nutrients in the body . . .

“The scorecard of the discussions on dosage limits confirms our suspicions of a ‘larger game’ going on in the background, unseen and unacknowledged by many of the participants. Far from living up to its fragile consensus on the necessity of introducing scientific risk management into decision-making on public health, the committee’s members again divided into two opposing camps.

“The European Union and its member states voiced support for the second option, that of letting science decide where the dividing line should be drawn between what is allowed and what is not. They were supported by Australia, New Zealand, the US, Africa, Japan, Switzerland, Canada, the UK and, remarkably, Russia, Korea and Peru.

“Norway was adamant, on the other hand, that its citizens should not have access to any supplement of vitamins and minerals that contain more than the RDA, the recommended dosage which is associated with an absence of the classical deficiency diseases such as scurvy . . . The Vikings found allies for their restrictive views in Brazil, Indonesia, Thailand, Benin, Malaysia and Nigeria.”

Despite the more benign face of the EU presented at the Codex meeting, European freedom-of-choicers are locked in a battle against

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Another pat on the back for the Atkins diet

USA — The holistically iconoclastic Atkins diet has received some more support, even within the orthodox precincts of the American Heart Assn. (AHA), but “experts” say there needs to be a lot more research before folks turn to a low-carbohydrate eating plan which allows them to gobble down fats galore while knocking off the pounds.

The latest pat on the back for the diet developed by best-selling author and diet guru Robert Atkins MD in New York came at the November meeting of the AHA, where Duke University’s Dr. Eric Westman, an internist, presented the results of a small (six-month) study of overweight people.

His conclusions: the Atkins diet took off more weight than did the low-fat approach (particularly championed by AHA and competing diet guru Dr. Dean Ornish) and also was “better” for cholesterol as well.

Said Westman, the Atkins diet did not seem to make cholesterol levels soar, as many feared, and allowed volunteers to shed more pounds.

The research — the third formal study in a little over a year finding something of merit in the Atkins approach — of course indirectly spoke to another element:

The relevance — if any — of cholesterol as a guide to weight and/or heart health, particularly given the onrush of evidence in fall 2002 that half or more of Americans who suffer heart attacks every year have neither unusually high cholesterol nor smoke cigarettes, the other most frequently cited assumed culprits in “heart disease.”

Nutritional doctors involved in cancer therapies remain largely appoplectic concerning the effects of the Atkins diet on prospective cancer patients due to clinical evidence and scattered research linking high-fat diets to cancer.

But they add that the low-carbohydrate part of the equation seems to bolster growing evidence that too many carbohydrates — particularly refined carbohydrates — are a “substrate” for metabolic dysfunction spanning obesity, diabetes, hypertension, atherosclerosis and cancer.

The Associated Press reported that the AHA’s ever-paradigm-changing researchers agreed that “much more study is necessary before the Atkins diet can be given across-the-board endorsement.”

US snubs biowar talks

USA — As possible US military action against Iraq loomed going into 2003, the Bush administration had abandoned an international effort to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention against germ warfare — one of the stated concerns of the US regarding Iraq.


Less than a year after a State Department envoy abruptly pulled out of biowarfare negotiations in Geneva, promising that the United States would return with new proposals, the administration has concluded that treaty revisions favored by the European Union and scores of other countries will not work and should not be salvaged, administration officials said, the Post reported.

The decision, which was conveyed to allies, was greeted with warnings that the move would weaken attempts to curb germ warfare programs at a time when biological weapons are a focus of concern because of the war on terrorism and the administration’s threats to launch a military campaign against Iraq.

It also came as the administration, which had angered allies by rejecting a series of multilateral agreements, was appealing to the international community to work with it in forging a new UN Security Council resolution on Iraq’s program to develop weapons of mass destruction.

The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, which has been ratified by the United States and 143 other countries, bans the development, stockpiling and production of germ warfare agents but has no enforcement mechanism. Negotiations on legally binding measures to enforce compliance have been underway in Geneva for seven years.