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Paper Title **The Regulatory Management of Health Claims - Global Status and Implications for South Africa**

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ABSTRACT

Awareness of functional foods has grown enormously since the concept first emerged in the late 1980's. They represent an opportunity to improve public health while simultaneously offering significant commercial opportunities to food companies. With this increasingly important role has come the realisation that adequate control of the health claims to be made for functional foods is required, and that this must necessarily be done through legislative means if the consumer is to be adequately protected. Regulation of health claims is a complex subject, requiring an acceptable balance to be found between adequate scientific substantiation of the claims and the need to present them in a format that can be easily understood by consumers. While different regulatory approaches are being progressed in different parts of the world, the fundamental issues to be addressed remain the same and this paper will outline these. It is essential that a suitable regulatory model be finalised for South Africa in view of the current proposals to significantly change numerous aspects of our food labelling regulations and to specifically incorporate provision for functional foods and associated claims. Ways in which this can be achieved will be discussed.