

## Breaking News on Supplements & Nutrition - Europe

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### Purity provides a hook for fish oil sellers

By Clarisse Douaud and Jess Halliday

**28/11/2006- New European standards and public awareness about contaminants in fish oil are opening up a new marketing angle for omega-3, with both finished product and fish oil companies touting their product's purity.**

Maximum levels of the organic pollutants dioxins and furans in fish oil intended for human consumption in the EU were set in July 2002 at 2pg/g. Since then, however, more information has become available on dioxin-like PCBs, leading to the introduction of a combined limit of 10pg/g as of November 4 2006.

The European Commission has stressed that within this limit dioxins and furans must still not exceed the 2 pg/g limit.

Fish oil suppliers including Epax and Croda have send out communications that their products comply with the new regulations - and indeed fall well below the limits.

In the finished product market, the climate in Europe is attracting overseas players who believe there are opportunities for supplements making a big deal out of purity. This is the platform First Vitality International is using to distribute US-based Cenestra Health's Omax3 supplements in the EU.

However Guernsey-based First Vitality says demand for high purity omega-3 - at least at the consumer end - has been driven more by public opinion than by the tightening EC restrictions on contaminants.

*"The public is more aware of what it's ingesting,"* First Vitality managing director David Ferguson told NutraIngredients. *"They are reading the labels."*

Omax3's label says it contains 1.5g of the essential fatty acids EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) per serving. Each Omax3 softgel is said to be over 91 per cent pure omega-3, and is third party tested for freshness and purity.

The fish oil used in Omax3 is sourced from small fish in the North American Arctic. According to Ferguson, this area has relatively low pollution and the use of small fish avoids heavier contamination that can occur higher along the food chain with larger fish.

Cenestra also uses a double distillation process for its fish oil and said Omax3 is independently tested and is free of contaminants such as mercury, dioxins, PCBs, pesticides, and heavy metals.

Finished product purity came into focus earlier this year in the UK, when two supplement-makers active in the UK market, Boots and Seven Seas, withdrew product batches from sale due to high levels of contaminants - although the authorities reassured consumers it was a regulatory matter and that the products posed no danger to the public.

It is widely agreed that consumers would be doing themselves a disservice if they avoided fish and fish oils out of fear of contaminants which, according to current advice, pose no risk if consumed only at small levels.

In 2004 the European market for omega-3 was worth approximately €160mn. Analyst Frost and Sullivan has predicted this market will average growth rates of 8 per cent to 2010.