



Press Release

BAN OF MEDICINAL PLANT KAVA IS LEADING TO A SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISASTER IN THE PACIFIC

This is the finding of an international meeting that took place in Brussels bringing together relevant professional and scientific associations, scientists and representatives of the private sector from the Pacific Islands and Europe. It was also attended by representatives of international organizations such as WHO, EU Commission, CTA, and the Commonwealth Secretariat (observers), and sponsored by PRO€INVEST (*Note 1) www.proinvest-eu.org and the EU-ACP Center for Development of Enterprise (CDE) (*Note 2) www.cde.int.

Kava is a traditional beverage that is consumed in the Pacific region and plays an important role in the social life in the communities of the Pacific Island. For about two thousand years it has been used without showing any kind of adverse effects. Due to its positive effects in the treatment of patients suffering from anxiety disorders and stress as well as its good tolerability, kava soon became a highly appreciated drug all over the world, particularly in Europe.

Last year the German Health authorities banned kava-containing products due to the occurrence of some cases with liver damage that, in their opinion, were supposed to be possibly related to kava intake. Most European and some non-EU countries followed in the same way.

Now a comprehensive report by Phytopharm Consulting (Berlin, Germany), commissioned by the CDE, concluded that kava can be regarded as a safe and effective herbal medicinal product, and that the measures taken by European health authorities are inappropriate and unjustified. The report was presented at the meeting and handed out to all the participating organizations and parties.

The meeting drew a frightening picture of what the ban led to. Scarcely recognized in Europe it resulted in an economic disaster for the Pacific states Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu where a major export market was destroyed practically overnight. It is driving many companies into bankruptcy and is threatening the livelihood of thousands of people of the poor rural communities. Furthermore, it revealed that European companies, too, suffered massive losses and that patients are deprived of a valuable medicine against anxiety and stress.

As a first step in fighting the ban the meeting established a “Kava Executive Committee” to coordinate future activities and re-discuss the scientific data with the goal to have the ban revised.

Dr. Joerg Gruenwald of Phytopharm who organized the meeting on behalf of ProInvest and CDE said: It is a scandal how herbal products are treated. All synthetic products used in the same indications have a much higher incidence of toxicity or strong addiction potential. Kava is safe and effective, as proved by more studies than most other drug in this indication. Therefore, the situation has to be reanalyzed.

For further details on the meeting and follow up activities please contact:

European issues:

Dr Joerg Gruenwald – President Phytopharm Consulting, Berlin/Germany

Email: jgruenwald@phytopharm.org

Pacific issues:

Denzil Phillips – L. Denzil Phillips, CDE Associate Expert Herbals and Pharmaceuticals,
Surrey/UK

Email: denzil@denzil.com

*Note 1: PROINVEST is a EU-ACP partnership programme developed and undertaken by the European Commission on behalf of the ACP countries. PROINVEST is managed by the CDE under the supervision of the EuropeAid Co-operation Office of the European Commission.

*Note 2: CDE is a joint EU-ACP institution devoted to private sector enterprise development in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific under the Cotonou Agreement.