

22nd May 2019

Response to the Consultation Paper on Options for the Future VAT Treatment of Food Supplements.

OUR SHOP: We have been in the health food business for the past 31 years. We have always been good employers, we pay our taxes, we have always followed all guidelines issued by the Government and EU bodies relating to the sale of health supplements. Our business motto is 'Promoting health in the community'. We have excellent communication with our customers – they trust us and we give them solid, sensible advice on having a healthy lifestyle through diet, exercise, supplementing with vitamins etc where needed. Our customers are well educated on how to keep well while using their doctor's advice and taking responsibility for their health. Part of our business is empowering people to be pro-active about their health and life style.

CHALLENGES: VAT on food supplements will have a significant impact on sales. When I look at my shop practically half of the items I sell would be subject to VAT. I find this so dis-heartening. What is the purpose of it ? Just to get more money from hard-pressed people who are working hard to stay positive and healthy. We have our quiet days in the shop and barely break even on those days. So if this VAT goes through it will feel like I am working as a tax collector. Its possible that my shop will not survive if VAT is added to supplements. At the moment I employ four people and this will have great effect on the lives of our 4 staff. I think shops are a vital part of a community and unfortunately a lot of them are closing down. This will be the reality if this VAT goes ahead.

On top of this we have to deal with Brexit and the unknown consequences of this. If Brexit goes through this will have a big impact on our business as we deal with a lot of English companies. We have lots of other challenges such as on-line selling, supermarkets selling a lot of our original products and we face these challenges daily.

CASE STUDY: A chat I had with a customer a few days ago. She has arthritis for several years. She uses fish oils and turmeric to reduce inflammation. She is managing to keep well and is keeping active. She has chosen to take these as she cannot take what her doctor prescribed as she has a delicate constitution and would react badly to prescribed medication. She is furious about this tax.

I object to being told that we should have been paying VAT on supplements all these years.

I strongly object to the proposal of putting VAT on supplements and ask that a zero rating should continue.

SIGNED