

**PE1376/G**

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Fergus D Cochrane  
Clerk  
Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

\_\_\_\_ Your ref:

Our ref: F3581107

11 February 2011

Dear Fergus

### **CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1376**

*Petition by James McDonald calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take necessary action to bring about a ban on the use of free methanol released by aspartame and to run an awareness campaign amongst health professionals to alert them of free methanol present in our diet.*

Thank you for your letter of 8 February 2011 to Roy Sturrock about Petition PE1376 seeking a response from the Scottish Government to a number of questions relating to the above petition following consideration by the Public Petitions Committee at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February. I shall respond to these questions in the order in which they have been raised.

- What is your response to the second part of the petition? Will you run an awareness campaign amongst health professionals to alert them of free methanol present in our diet and will you substantiate your response?

We will not run an awareness campaign for health professionals because we do not agree with the petitioner's position that there is a need to bring about a ban on the use of free methanol released by aspartame.

- Will you elaborate on the 'No' answer given in your 5 January 2011 letter? What is the basis for that position

The Government receives advice from the Food Standards Agency Scotland (FSAS). The FSAS have advised that there is no evidence to support a ban on aspartame. The FSAS have advised that the extensive body of evidence available shows the body can safely metabolise the amount of methanol produced from the breakdown of aspartame as well as that produced from consuming fruits and vegetables and their juices and from legitimate alcoholic beverages. We have no reason to discount the advice provided by FSAS.



I hope this information is helpful to the Committee in its further consideration of the Petition.

Yours sincerely

**FERGUS MILLAN**