

Brussels, 6th July 2011

**European Parliament
Plenary**

**Second Reading: Food Information to Consumers
Rapporteur: Sommer (DE, EPP)**

Dear all,

On 6 July, the European Parliament voted on “food information to consumers”, adopting the compromise agreed in the trilogues with 605 votes for, 45 against and 26 abstentions. Please find below a summary of the debate, held on 5 July.

The Council is expected to agree to the compromise in October 2011 and it will then be published in the EU's Official Journal at the end of October 2011.

Please bear in mind that following today's vote and the Council's expected adoption in October, the implementation of the Regulation will be crucial and much work still needs to be done by the EU institutions. FoodDrinkEurope's secretariat and its members will also have a lot of work to ensure the Regulation is implemented correctly.

Kind regards,
Isabel Ortiz
Director Consumer Information, Diet and Health

5th July 2011

Plenary

Food Information to Consumers

Sommer (DE, EPP) welcomed the fact that after a long, difficult debate, the institutions have reached an agreement. It should advantage both the consumers and industry (e.g. through greater legal certainty), especially SMEs. She sees an end in sight, despite the differences between MS, and is pleased to see the compromises on origin labelling, imitation products, meat glue, legibility, non-pre-packed products allergens etc. Finally, she thanked those involved, notably Commissioner Dalli and the Hungarian Presidency.

Speaking for the **Polish Presidency**, Minister Sawicki welcomed the compromise and said that, assuming the Parliament votes in favour, the Council will adopt it in early October and it will then be published in the Official Journal by the end of October 2011. He believes it benefits the consumer without burdening the industry. He mentioned the agreement on legibility, allergens and exemptions. However, the work is not done; the Commission has to report on three issues within three years (i.e. alcoholic beverages, origin labelling and transfats) and, in certain cases, it can also come forward with a legislative proposal.

Commissioner Dalli said the Commission came forward with its proposal over three years ago and it is only now coming to a conclusion. He thanked the rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs, the Hungarian Presidency and those which came before. He highlighted the progress made and said it improves legibility (through the minimum font size); introduces mandatory nutrition labelling, helping consumers make better choices; better protects consumers with allergens labelling; and increases transparency through origin labelling. He regrets that FOP has been deleted and that alcoholic beverages have been exempted and hopes the right balance will be struck on several issues to be dealt with in the future:

- 1) The Commission will conduct a study on slaughter without stunning under the EU strategy on animal welfare.
- 2) The Commission has asked EFSA to re-evaluate aspartame, including its effect on pregnant women, before September. It will then take the results into account e.g. considering whether to revise the permitted levels.
- 3) It is looking at how to classify food extracts with colouring properties.
- 4) It is considering non-pre-packed food for direct sale under the revision of the food hygiene package.

The Commissioner concluded that the compromise text is a significant step forward for consumers.

Liese (DE, EPP) sees this as a good result for consumers; we're giving them more information without telling them what they should eat. He commented on imitation foods (where cheese is not made from milk it should be labelled). He also said that, while we often think of the large companies such as Nestle or Ferrero, the legislation needs to work for small companies too.

Willmott (UK, S&D) criticised the money spent to prevent transparent labelling (industry lobbying) but claimed several victories for the Parliament: Origin labelling, including an assessment on meat in processed food (e.g. a chicken sandwich) and transfats, often added to food unnecessarily. The S&D will continue to call for a ban on transfats. She was disappointed to see no mandatory FOP labelling but is glad to see voluntary schemes (especially traffic lights) can be used. She concluded that the compromise marks real progress but that the S&D will continue to push for improvements in the period to come.

Gerbrandy (NL, ALDE) also considers the compromise marks major progress for consumers and welcomed that the liberal line was taken on board i.e. people have the information to make their own decisions. He claimed two victories, namely palm oil and transfats. The Parliament supported a complete ban on artificial transfats, this would have been better but nonetheless, he considers it progress. He also referred to the importance of focusing on the use of new technologies, as the label is not the only way for manufacturers to provide information to consumers.

Schlyter (SE, Greens) would have liked to have seen alcohol included – he blamed the alcohol lobby – and regretted the nutrition labelling compromise. He was however pleased to see the consumer will no longer be misled on e.g. imitation foods and palm oil. He welcomed the agreement on origin labelling; the consumer will now be able to decide on the quality of the meat. He also welcomed the provisions on nano-labelling, transfats and allergens.

Stevenson (UK, ECR) welcomed the compromise; he wants to avoid the same situation as with novel foods. He then came back to Commissioner Dalli's comments on slaughter without stunning – meat from these animals should not enter the chain and he welcomed the Commission's work to ensure this.

Liotard (NL, GUE) waved some cake around which she claimed was to celebrate Dolly the sheep's 15th birthday. She then hammered home that food from cloned animals should be labelled and, as a result, she will not support the compromise. She was also disappointed with provisions on transfats, origin labelling and nutrition labelling (particularly the per portion declaration).

Rossi (IT, EFD) supported the Parliament's text at first reading and was disappointed to see how far the text at second reading departed from it. He won't be supporting the compromise because it represents too little progress, particularly on origin labelling and national provisions.

Dodds (UK, NI) said consumers have the right to information which is not misleading. However, she was concerned about origin labelling and its impact on trade – it should not be used as a protectionist measure.

Ayuso (ES, EPP) sees the compromise as a balance between costs and benefits.

De Castro (IT, S&D) sees this as an important step in the right direction but it could have been more ambitious when it comes to origin labelling.

Ries (BE, ALDE): Can the Commission look at transfats in less than three years? We need to be more ambitious in the fight against obesity.

Girling (UK, ECR) welcomed the compromise.

Scotta (IT, EFD) confused origin labelling and traceability, linking it to the e-coli outbreak. He said it relates to consumer confidence and quality.

De Lange (NL, EPP) asked how the rules will work in practice e.g. imitation cheese on pizzas. She was concerned about correct implementation and stressed the importance of compliance.

Westlund (SE, S&D) welcomed origin labelling because it advantages farmers with higher standards i.e. Swedish farmers, but said it could have gone further. She was disappointed with the decision on transfats (transfats should be banned) and agreed with nano-labelling and the mandatory per 100g/100ml declaration.

Catalan **Tremosa i Balcells (ES, ALDE)** commented on amendment 137 on language requirements. **Manner (FI, ALDE)** offered her support.

Ouzky (CZ, ECR) and **Auconie (FR, EPP)** support the compromise.

Euro-sceptic **Nutall (UK, EFD)** said this was another decision which should have been taken at the national level.

Thyssen (BE, EPP) supports existing language requirements. She also said she would have liked to have seen traffic lights and noted the difference between origin labelling and traceability.

Perello Rodriguez (ES, S&D) said, on the one hand, this is a step in the right direction but, on the other hand, we could have done more.

Vergnaud (FR, S&D) welcomed the result, especially given the pressures from industry, and hopes origin labelling will be extended in the future. She argued that alcohol needs special rules. We're not there yet but it is a positive step in the right direction.

Tabajdi (HU, S&D) was disappointed with origin labelling. Why did the right give into the industry lobby on nutrition labelling?

Tarabella (BE, S&D) it has been difficult to get as far as we have and the Commission must now continue its work.

Kelly (IE, EPP), **Obermayr (AT, NI)** and **Manner (FI, ALDE)** also commented on origin labelling.

Zemke (PL, S&D) talked about consumer education.

Roth-Behrendt (DE, S&D) said the Parliament has compromised too much; it should have been more courageous. She said it would be better to go to conciliation.

Dorfmann (IT, EPP) would have liked to have seen the Parliament give in less on alcoholic drinks.

Commissioner Dalli said we should empower the consumer – we should not tell consumers what to eat but what they are eating. He agreed with Gerbrandy about the need to use new technologies to do this. He also responded to the comments on enforcement by De Lange: Before bringing forward new rules, we need to make sure existing legislation is implemented. He agreed with De Lange that companies should not be able to circumvent the rules. In response to Liotard, he said he was disappointed with the lack of agreement on novel foods. He does not want to change the rules on languages. He described it as a mile stone in consumer information and now looks to the next step i.e. implementation, where a lot of work needs to be done.

Minister Sawicki, **Polish Presidency**, agreed with Dalli, we're not telling consumers what to eat but what they're eating. He also said labelling is not the only solution; we need to educate consumers. In response to Liotard, he said these issues will be dealt with in the future. Finally, he gave Poland's position on origin labelling (rather than the Presidency's position).

Sommer (DE, EPP) concluded the debate. She said we all would have liked to have gone further but this is the nature of compromise. It isn't right that others are criticising this, it threatens the agreement and we don't want another novel foods.

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