

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Food Labeling Proposal - European Parliament 1st Reading Vote

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Report Highlights:

On June 14, 2010, the European Parliament (EP) voted in plenary on the European Commission's "food information to consumers" proposal. The EP voted to expand mandatory country of origin labeling to all meat, poultry, fish and dairy products and rejected the use of traffic light labeling. This report provides a summary of the outcome of the vote.

General Information:

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FIRST READING VOTE ON “FOOD INFORMATION TO CONSUMERS” PROPOSAL

Intro

In January 2008, the European Commission published a proposal to revise the EU’s existing general food labeling requirements laid down in Directive 2000/13/EC. For detailed information on the “Food Information to Consumers” proposal see [GAIN report E48020](#). The proposal has to be adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure (the former co-decision procedure) which means that the two co-legislators, i.e. the Council and the European Parliament, both have “two readings” to come to an agreement on the proposal. If the two institutions fail to come to an agreement, a “Conciliation Committee” is convened.

European Parliament 1st Reading Vote

In March 2009, the European Parliament’s Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee decided to delay the adoption of its draft 1st reading report because nearly 1,000 amendments were tabled by other Parliament Committees. On March 16, 2010, the ENVI Committee adopted a new 1st reading report which was voted on in plenary on June 14, 2010.

SUMMARY OF THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE

Legibility (minimum font size)

The across-the-board requirement that information on food labels should be printed with a font size of minimum 3mm was deleted, except for the indication of the energy content. “Clear legibility” should take several factors into account such as font type, color and contrast with the background.

Nutrition Labeling

The European Parliament agrees with the Commission on the compulsory indication of nutrition facts on the front of food packs. The indication of the sugar, fat, salt and saturates content, as well as the energy content in calories would become mandatory on front labels, expressed as percentages of GDAs (guided daily amounts) per 100g /ml. Details of protein, fibers and transfats should be included elsewhere on the packaging. Allowing the use of national schemes such as the U.K.’s traffic light labeling system alongside the mandatory EU format was rejected by the European Parliament.

Nanomaterials

The European Parliament amended the Commission proposal to make the indication of nanomaterials in the ingredients list mandatory.

Country of Origin Labeling

The European Parliament voted through an amendment to make country of origin labeling mandatory for all meat, poultry, dairy products and other single-ingredient products. For meat, poultry and fish used as an ingredient in processed, the country of origin should also be indicated. Information on meat labels should include where the animal was born, reared and slaughtered. Meat from slaughter without stunning (according to certain religious traditions) should be labeled as such.

Alcoholic Beverages

Ingredient labeling for ready to drink mixed alcoholic beverages better known as alcopops would become mandatory. Wine, beer and spirits are exempt from the mandatory ingredient labeling requirement.

Next Steps

The proposal has to be adopted under the ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision) and will now go to the Council for a first reading. If the Council does not agree with the European Parliament's amendments, it needs to adopt a "Council position" which it then submits to the European Parliament for a second reading. The Treaty of Lisbon does not establish time limits for the first reading phase of the ordinary legislative procedure.