

PK ČR position on the Provision of food information to consumers – vote in ENVI Committee for a Recommendation of the European Parliament (Second Reading) on the Council position

Origin Labeling

1. COMMENT:

We support maintaining the existing framework for origin labeling which requires origin labeling on products where a failure to do so might mislead the consumer and where vertical legislation already applies (e.g. to beef, fish and honey). In addition, the provision of origin information is permitted on a voluntary basis.

Companies, which manufacture certain composite products in large volumes, must ensure a steady supply of ingredients and raw materials. As a consequence, it is sometimes necessary to source ingredients from different origins depending on availability, market price, unexpected shortages, etc. Any decision to enforce mandatory origin labelling for foods in general, and particularly for composite food products, would cause severe difficulties for manufacturers as it is not feasible to change the label of a composite product each time the origin of one of its ingredients is sourced from a different country.

An immediate extension, particularly to primary ingredients, would prove unworkable given that the origin of raw materials may change according to various factors (e.g. seasonality, availability, price and quality).

Any extension of mandatory origin labelling should, at a minimum, be preceded by an impact assessment to consider its feasibility, practicability and consumer need.

The labelling of “*of unspecified origin*” unnecessarily ‘downgrades’ food operators that are responsibly using ingredients from different sources to ensure high quality products, as the traceability of the ingredients is guaranteed anyway in compliance with existing EU legislation on traceability.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendments 12, 120, 125, 141, 142, 143, 144, 220, 221, 222, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 246, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 267, 268, 364

REJECT amendments 13, 54, 117, 118, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 139, 140, 159, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 244, 245, 247, 248, 255, 256, 265, 266, 327, 328

Nutrition Labeling

2. COMMENT:

PK ČR believes that nutrition labeling should comprise the following:

Front of Pack: Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) icon for Energy (i.e. values for energy are expressed in the absolute amount per portion and its percentage of the GDA).

Back of Pack: “Big 8” nutrients (energy, protein, carbohydrates, sugars, fat, saturated fat, fiber and sodium) to be expressed per 100g/100ml; the format is to be labeled in accordance with the current labeling rules under Directive 1990/496/EC in a table and, where space does not allow, in a linear format. The voluntary expression per portion, in addition to 100 g/ml, should be maintained.

Exemptions: Flexibility in relation to the mandatory nutrition labeling should be given for small packs (with the largest printable surface of less than 80 cm²) and certain types of foods and packaging.

Voluntary nutrition labeling: It should be possible to declare other nutrient voluntarily.

Transfats (TFAs) (Art. 29): The labelling of TFA should remain voluntary. Taking into account the significant efforts made by industry in considerably reducing the amount of industrially produced TFAs in food products, the total dietary TFA intake today in the EU is in most countries below the WHO recommended level of 1% dietary energy, and is therefore of no health concern (EFSA opinion of 2004).

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendments 16, 49, 57, 61, 71, 75, 77, 79, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 104, 105, 141, 280, 281, 282, 294, 295, 296, 298, 299, 300, 309, 310, 320, 326, 329, 351, 362, 364, 398, 399, 401, 402

REJECT amendments 14, 15, 24, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 76, 130, 131, 132, 133, 187, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 283, 285, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 297, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308, 312, 313, 314

Additional forms of expression/presentation

3. COMMENT:

PK ČR is opposed to all forms of national voluntary schemes (“additional forms of expression/presentation”) and therefore rejects those aspects of the Council text related thereto (particularly Council Article 34.2). This would *de facto* allow national schemes in the EU which would create barriers to trade and fragment the single market. If introduced, additional voluntary schemes should be EU-agreed, science-based, factual and non-discriminatory.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendments 77, 318, 319, 320

REJECT amendments 317, 321, 322

National provisions

4. COMMENT:

Introducing national provisions (i.e. mandatory labelling requirements) would disrupt the single market, impacting on consumers and industry.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendments 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 18, 326, 335

REJECT amendments 47, 327, 328, 332, 333, 334

Clarity & Legibility of Labels/Minimum font size

5. COMMENT:

PK ČR supports the Parliament’s position at first reading which acknowledges that legibility depends on several factors (colour, contrast, character pitch etc.) and is not limited to font size only. If the Parliament considers a font size, it should be no more than 1mm with exemptions for small packs (with the largest printable surface of less than 80cm²).

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendments 9, 25, 49, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 191, 360

REJECT amendments 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 187

Reduction claims

6. COMMENT:

Amendment 32 would prohibit reduction claims where the reduction of a nutrient is not accompanied by a corresponding reduction of energy. However, a reduction of the content of unsaturated fatty acids through their replacement with fats such as monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fatty acids will not result in a reduction in the energy content although such replacement is clearly beneficial for health and is being promoted by public and health authorities (WHO, EU Platform on Diet, national health and nutrition plans, etc).

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

REJECT amendment 32

General transition period

7. COMMENT:

PK ČR supports the general three year transition period, with five years for nutrition labelling provisions, as proposed by the Council. This will ensure manufacturers, particularly SMEs, are able to implement the legislation properly.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendment 146

REJECT amendments 348, 349, 350

Detailed issues

8. COMMENT:

While asking that due regard be given to the proposal's objective to simplify provisions related to food information, PK ČR would like to comment on the following issues in particular:

I. **Warning message on a source of phenylalanine** : There is no internationally recognised scientific evidences which have established a formal link between phenylalanine and/or aspartame and a harmful effect on pregnant woman, therefore the amendment 355 is not based on sound science.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

REJECT amendment 355

II. **Imitation foods** (Article 7/Annex VI): PK ČR believes that a definition for "imitation foods" is unworkable and that it goes beyond what the proposal originally intended.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

REJECT amendments 32, 89, 98, 145, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 365, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385

III. **Packaging at retail level:** PK ČR wants to underline the point that, though difficult to quantify, the market and sales of meat products through (often big) retail outlets is a huge one. PK ČR fails to understand that, in spite of claims made by consumer groups, legislators and parliamentarians that the particulars referred to in Articles 9 and 10 are necessary to adequately inform consumers, meat products sold via retail outlets and supermarket delicatessen counters are exempted from the provisions on basic consumer information. One may understand that such derogations in a direct sales situation are given on the grounds that competent personnel is available to inform the consumer when served "on demand" (e.g. at butcher shops) . However, these derogations are also taken for granted in situations where products are offered for direct sale in a "self service" situation, without competent staff being present to inform the consumer when requesting information that is subjected to FIC proposal. This is not acceptable as a principle of correct consumer information and represents unfair competition for food operator making the necessary investments for correct and complete labeling. From the producer and supplier view their competitiveness is endangered.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendment 137

IV. **Enzymes:** PK ČR believes there is a need to implement the legislation properly and work with enzymes in the list of aditives.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendment 393

V. **Additives:** There are some useful amendments concerning to additives but it is necessary to take into account that there is a specific legislation (regulation 1334/2008). On the other hand, establishing a new category of "colouring food" could be seen as very useful (now it is called "the foodstuff with the secondary colouring effect". Some of the amendments require specific mandatory labelling „contains flavour enhancer“ and „contains appetite – enhancing ingredients“. This is not acceptable because this could open discussion for other E-numbers that have all been approved based on sound scientific evidence.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendment 392, 395

REJECT amendment 352, 356, 396

VI. **Sausage casings:** PK ČR believes the amendment does not provide any greater clarity for the consumer than the current regulations. PK ČR would reject the use of the words "artificial casing" on sausages with collagen casings as these are no more artificial than intestinal casings, both coming from the animal after processing. The wording "artificial" suggests plastic to the consumer and is therefore misleading. Cellulose and plastic casings are often removed from the sausage before sale. In any case, when left on the sausage non-edible casings are simply packaging materials. They are excluded from labelling as ingredients and are covered by Regulation 1935/2004, as amended, on materials and articles intended to come into Contact with Foodstuffs.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

REJECT amendment 381

VII. **Private labels:** There is the primary effort to establish mandatory labelling of the real manufacturers introducing their products under the private labels. The consumers want to know who is the genuine manufacturer of the private label product.

➔PK ČR would therefore ask MEPs to:

SUPPORT amendment 158