EU Ecolabel

2008/0152(COD) - 17/02/2009

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report drawn up by Salvatore TATARELLA (UEN, IT) amending, under the first reading of the codecision procedure, the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a Community Ecolabel scheme.

The main amendments were as follows:

Scope: this Regulation shall apply to food and drink if a study conducted by the Commission, by 31 December 2011 at the latest demonstrates that it is possible for food, or only for some specific categories of food, to establish reliable criteria covering the environmental performance during the whole life cycle of the products, with particular attention to the feasibility and the impact of Ecolabel criteria on food as well as on products of fishing and aquaculture.

CMR and pharmaceutical products: in conformity with the precautionary principle the Ecolabel may not be awarded to products containing substances, preparations or mixtures classified as very toxic, toxic, dangerous to the environment, carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction (CMR). For specific categories of goods, the Commission may adopt measures to grant derogations. Because of their special nature, pharmaceutical products must remain excluded from the scope of this regulation.

Competent bodies: they shall be provided with all the necessary financial means and human resources. They shall carry out the verification process in a consistent and reliable manner, in accordance with standards of EN 45000 series or equivalent international standards.

Ecolabel criteria: the Ecolabel criteria shall: (i) set out the environmental requirements that a

product must fulfil in order to bear the Ecolabel and shall be based on a scientific analysis; (ii)

be based on the precautionary principle; (iii) be based on the full life cycle of the products and on all their environmental impacts. For products covered by existing Community legislation on labelling, Ecolabel criteria shall always correspond to the highest environmental requirements. In addition, the Commission shall ensure that reducing animal testing is a key consideration in the development and revision of the criteria.

Revision of the criteria: stakeholders represented in the EUEB may be put in charge of leading the development of criteria, provided that they can demonstrate expertise in the product area, as well as the ability to lead the process with neutrality and in line with the aims of this Regulation. Where there is a need for a **non-substantial revision of the criteria**, a shortened revision procedure as laid down in Annex I Ba may apply.

Working plan: the Commission shall prepare and publish a three-year Community Ecolabel working plan setting objectives as well as a non-exhaustive list of product groups which will be considered as priorities for Community action. This plan shall be regularly updated.

Approving criteria: the Commission should explain changes in its draft proposal as compared to the EUEB opinion. It should also have a deadline for the final decision.

SMEs: when establishing Ecolabel criteria care shall be taken not to introduce measures whose implementation may impose disproportionate administrative and economic burdens on SMEs. In order to protect SMEs, the Commission shall: (a) ensure that the information offices to be set up under the forthcoming Small Business Act are also assigned the task of providing information about the ecolabelling scheme; and (b) actively promote the approximation of different labelling schemes.

Prior registration: as well as applications for registration including all relevant documentation, the economic operator shall provide evidence that compliance with the Ecolabel criteria has been **certified** by an independent body. Ecolabel shall be subject to payment of a **fee** relating to the costs of processing the application. In any case, the fee should be reduced by at least 25% for SMEs.

Checks: the Commission shall ensure that the competent bodies undertake spot checks on a regular basis. The Member States shall provide the competent bodies with all the necessary means to carry out these checks.

Promotional activities: the Commission, Member States and participating companies shall, in cooperation with the EUEB, allocate significant resources to promote the use of the Community Ecolabel by awareness-raising actions, information campaigns and the dissemination of information from the dedicated Ecolabel website. They should also encourage the uptake of the scheme, in particular by setting up help desk services for operators, especially SMEs. Whilst the marketing of the Ecolabel scheme shall remain a national competence so as to better reflect the consumer preferences of each Member State, a common marketing expertise shall be put in place to provide guidance, and coordination, to promote exchange of best practices, and to develop concrete action plans at Community level.