Authorisation and refusal of authorisation of certain health claims made on foods and referring to children's development and health

2011/2549(RPS) - 06/04/2011

The European Parliament finally rejected in plenary a draft resolution tabled by its Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calling for the rejection of the Commission’s draft regulation on the authorisation and refusal of authorisation of certain health claims made on foods and referring to children’s development and health. The resolution did not in fact obtain the required qualified majority (388 votes) in the plenary vote. There were 328 votes against it, with 26 abstentions.

To recall, members of the parliamentary committee opposed the adoption of the draft regulation considering it to be incompatible with the aim and content of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006. This draft regulation provided in particular for the addition of a list of nutritional claims authorised by the European Union, a claim according to which docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) intake contributes to the normal visual development of infants up to 12 months of age.

For members of the committee, such a claim could be misleading because, even if scientific evidence shows that DHA in breast milk contributes to the visual development of infants, **synthesised DHA added to formula milks and other foods intended for infants** is, however, in a different biological environment to breast milk.

Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 requires that all new nutritional claims must be submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for its opinion. However, EFSA was not able to reach the conclusion that there is a cause and effect relationship between the intake of infant and follow-on formula supplemented with DHA and visual function which was the reason why members of the committee considered that **more research was required into the possible effects, both beneficial and harmful,** of DHA supplementation before the use of DHA in follow-on formulae and foods for infants can be claimed as beneficial. As a result, they called on Parliament to reject the draft regulation.