Resolution on the draft implementing regulation amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks

2013/2524(RPS) - 13/03/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 409 votes to 247, with 19 abstentions, a resolution tabled by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the draft Commission implementing regulation amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 of the European Parliament and the Council on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of spirit drinks.

Parliament states that it **opposes the adoption of this draft Commission Regulation** amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 110/2008 for the following reasons:

Minimum anethole level of 0.5 grams per litre: the Commission proposes to insert a definition of absinthe in Annex II of Regulation (EC) No 110/2008, which would provide for this minimum level of anethole. Parliament notes that the composition of absinthe depends a large degree on regional availability of certain herbal plants and on varying consumer preferences, and not all traditional recipes contain a minimum anethole level. The anethole level of many products currently available on the market remains below the 0.5 grams per litre proposed by the Commission, and, as a result of this new definition, producers of absinthe variations would be required either to abstain from using the term ‘absinthe’ as their sales denomination or to change their long-standing recipes, notwithstanding their traditional methods of production. Parliament warns that such a change of inherent product characteristics may irritate consumers and may hence undermine consumer confidence.

Requirement for a quantity of thujone: the Commission proposes that the definition of absinthe include a requirement for a quantity of thujone (alpha and beta) between 5 and 35 milligrams per litre. However, Parliament notes that in its opinion of 2 February 2002, the Commission's Scientific Committee on Food did not consider it appropriate to use thujone as a chemically identified flavouring substance and supported the application of the upper limits in foods and beverages which remain in place pursuant to Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 1334/2008. Accordingly Parliament considers the stipulation of a minimum thujone level as part of an absinthe definition is in **contradiction to the current paradigm for dealing with this potentially harmful substance**. It notes, lastly, that some absinthe producers have started using Artemisia plants that are free of thujone or contain only very low levels of this substance.