Stockfarming: prohibition of certain substances with hormonal or thyrostatic action, of beta-agonists

2000/0132(COD) - 20/02/2003 - Council position

The common position, adopted with the abstention of the United Kingdom, is based on a modified Commission proposal that already includes several amendments proposed by then European Parliament into account. As adopted by the Council by qualified majority, it does not alter the basic objectives of the proposed Directive: to protect consumer health and reach WTO compliance. There is no difference of opinion between the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission regarding the essential elements of the proposed directive and in particular on the need for maintaining a prohibition on the use of oestradiol 17 beta and its ester-like derivatives for growth promotion purposes and to introduce a temporary precautionary prohibition on the use of other hormones while additional scientific information, necessary for a fuller assessment of the risk, is gathered. In deciding such measures the Council has taken into account the latest scientific evidence and risk assessments, in particular the opinion of the SCVMPH of April 2002, together with other possible consequences, in particular environmental, of the large scale use of hormones in stock farming. The recitals of the proposed directive have been modified accordingly. Contrary to the Commission's proposal, the Council considered preferable to let the Parliament and the Council take future risk management decisions concerning the updates of the directive's provisions in the light of the new evidence which the Commission is required to gather taking into account recent scientific data from all possible sources and present to them. The Council, in agreement with the Commission and Parliament, has decided to maintain the use of certain of the substances, where this is strictly necessary, for therapeutic purposes or zootechnical treatment as this is not likely to constitute an unacceptable hazard for public health due to the nature and the limited duration of the treatments, the limited quantities administered and the strict conditions under which their administration can take place, laid down in Directive 96/22/EC in order to prevent any possible misuse. The Council has, however, considered appropriate, in the light of the existing information to limit as far as reasonably achievable the exposure to oestradiol 17 beta and only authorise those very few treatments (foetus maceration or mummification, pyometra in cattle and oestrus induction in cattle, horses, sheep or goats) for which no viable and effective alternatives seem presently to be available. Such treatments are not likely to present an unacceptable risk to public health, especially in the light of the new very stringent conditions required to be taken to avoid any possible abusive use. The Council has equally provided for a timely review of the provisions concerning treatments of farm animals with oestradiol 17 beta. Lastly, the Council feels that the fact that it has to a very large extent taken account of the European Parliament's position ought to lead to an early adoption of the Directive. There are also some statements added to this text, such as : - the Council and the Commission emphasise that the aim pursued in Article 11a is, in five years' time, to ban the use of oestradiol 17 beta or its ester-like derivatives for treating farm animals and replace it with equally effective substances; - the Commission undertakes to continue its efforts to establish Community-wide harmonised maximum levels for natural sex hormonesand validated methods of analysis, having due regard to physiological levels observed in farm animals.