Indication of the ingredients in foodstuffs

2001/0199(COD) - 20/02/2003 - Council position

The common position adopted by the Council by a qualified majority represents a balanced compromise, including the majority of the measures proposed by the Commission whilst restricting the scope of the exemptions provides for, and is in keeping with the requests for amendments made by the European Parliament at first reading in order to increase the accuracy of the information which foodstuff labels must carry. The Council considers that the Common Position achieves a good balance between the prerequisites for the proper functioning of the single market and consumer protection/information. As regards the difference between the common position and the amended proposal : - exemptions from the obligation to indicate the components of certain compound ingredients (ingredients whose composition is governed by Community legislation in force) and to comply with the presentation requirements for the list of ingredients are allowed only for ingredients accounting for less than 2% of the finished product, instead of the 5% proposed by the Commission. This compromise stems from the European Parliament's wish to dispense with the exemptions in question in order to provide consumers with more detailed information and affords a certain amount of flexibility, which the Commission advocates to enable manufacturers to meet the much more stringent foodstuff labelling requirements; - it is no longer possible not to repeat an ingredient as long as the label carries an explanatory note. This was in response to the European Parliament's request; - the list of allergenic ingredients should be reviewed and updated systematically to reflect scientific advances and not just every two years. Moreover, when the list is updated, ingredients may be taken off it if there is scientific evidence that they are no longer allergenic; - celery and mustard and their derived products are added to the list of allergenic substances. This is also in line with the European Parliament's request. As regards the main innovations introduced by the Council, these relate to: - coverage of certain substances which are not additives but are used in the same way and with the same purpose as processing aids and are still present in the finished product; - obligation to indicate the ingredients originating from an ingredient listed in Annex IIIa with a clear reference to the name of this ingredient's, unless the name under which the foodstuff is sold clearly refers to the ingredient concerned. Other modifications have been made, of a purely technical nature and aiming at clarifying the text of the Directive.