

Protection of human health: hygiene of foodstuffs

2000/0178(COD) - 14/07/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the hygiene of foodstuffs. **CONTENT** : this present proposal results from a recast of Community legislation on : - food hygiene as contained in Council Directive 93/43/EEC on the hygiene of foodstuffs and in a number of Council Directives on public health problems and governing the production and placing on the market of products of animal origin; - animal health aspects related to the placing on the market of products of animal origin, as contained in a number of Council Directives that partially overlap with the food hygiene Directives; - official controls on products of animal origin contained in the above product-specific Directives. These Directives (17 in total) have been gradually developed since 1964 in response to the needs of the internal market, taking into account a higher level of protection. The leitmotif throughout the recast of the hygiene rules is that food operators bear the full responsibility for the safety of the food they produce. The implementation of hazard analysis and control principles and the observance of hygiene rules must ensure this safety. This is in line with the internationally accepted approach advocated by the Codex Alimentarius. In addition, provisions are made for the hygiene rules to be applied at all levels of the food chain, from primary production to the final customer. The principle objective of the general and specific hygiene rules is to ensure a high level of consumer protection with regard to food safety, taking into account in particular: - the principle that primary responsibility for food safety rests with the manufacturer; - the need to ensure food safety throughout the food chain, starting with primary production; - maintaining the cold chain for food that cannot be safely stored at ambient temperatures; - general implementation of the hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) system which, together with the application of good hygiene practice, should reinforce the responsibility of food business operators; - that codes to good practice are a valuable instrument for guiding food business operators at all levels of the food chain on the compliance with food hygiene rules; - the need to carry out official controls at stages of production, manufacture and placing on the market; - the establishment of microbiological criteria and temperature control requirements based on a scientific assessment of risk; - the need to ensure that imported foods are of at least the same or an equivalent health standard. The implementation of this Directive has shown that these principles remain valid and that their application can be extended to all foodstuffs. It is therefore a logical consequence of the recasting exercise to apply the rules of Directive 93/43/EEC to products of animal origin as well, which at present fall outside its scope.