

Novel foods and novel food ingredients

1992/0426(COD) - 23/10/1995 - Council position

The Council's common position took account of Parliament's wishes with regard to several important points and makes some amendments to the initial proposal. * The scope of the regulation was extended to expressly cover proteins from unicellular organisms. The following elements were also included: - all novel foods and food ingredients consisting of micro-organisms, fungi or algae or isolated from them; - novel foods and ingredients isolated from plants and animals except for those which had a history of safe food use; - all foods containing genetically modified organisms; - furthermore, the general criteria for assessing products were included in the regulation. * The procedure for placing products on the market was strengthened: - the reference to independent experts was removed and the task of carrying out an initial assessment of requests was instead allocated to the national food assessment bodies; - wider publication of the results of the decisions taken; - clear, detailed requirements for the preparation of the dossiers to be sent to the authorities concerning products covered by the regulation; - clarification regarding cases where the Member States or the Commission could present a reasoned objection to the marketing of a product; - clarification of the procedure for the formal decision authorising the marketing of products together with the scope of such decisions; - simplified procedure for certain foods or food ingredients that did not pose any public health problems; - clarification as to the scope and allocation of tasks between the procedures provided for by the regulation on novel foods and the Community legislation on seeds, from the point of view of both assessment procedures and labelling. * As far as labelling is concerned, the common position strengthened and clarified the additional specific requirements applying to novel foods and novel food ingredients. The Council also introduced a series of rules to ensure that the consumer was systematically informed of the following points: - the differences between the characteristics or food properties of a novel food and a conventional product; in this case, the labelling should indicate the method by which the characteristics or properties in question were obtained for the consumer's information; - the presence in the product of material which was not present in an existing equivalent foodstuff and which may have implications for the health of certain sections of the population (such as allergens); - the presence in the product of material which was not present in an existing equivalent foodstuff and which may give rise to ethical concerns among certain sections of the population; - the presence of a genetically modified organism. * The Council also took over Parliament's amendments concerning: - the protection of information provided in the application of procedures laid down by the regulation; - the confirmation that the general arrangements for the control of foodstuffs applied to the products in question; - the entry into force of the regulation 12 months after its publication in the OJ.