

Food law, European Food Authority, and food safety

2000/0286(COD) - 08/11/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to lay down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Authority, and laying down procedures in matters of food. **CONTENT:** The White Paper on Food Safety outlined the Commission's strategic objectives, priorities and work programme in relation to food safety in particular, and food law in general. It elaborated the Commission's commitment to develop a comprehensive integrated approach to regulating the food supply chain. In particular, it proposed the establishment of a European Food Authority and an overarching set of definitions, principles and measures to ensure a high level of protection and the effective functioning of the internal market in food. Against this background, this proposal for a European Regulation responds to this commitment by laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing procedures in matters of food safety and establishing a rapid alert system for food and feeds. It creates a European Food Authority defining its scope, tasks and responsibilities. One of the objectives of this Regulation is to establish common definitions, including a definition of food, and to lay down the overarching guiding principles and legitimate objectives for food law in order to ensure a high level of health protection and the effective functioning of the internal market. Moreover, this Regulation seeks to harmonise at Community level existing national requirements, placing them in the European context. A further objective of this proposal is not only to harmonise national requirements, but also to provide the basic framework of principles and definitions for future European food law. Where measures are revised in the future or where proposals are drafted in new areas, this Regulation will provide the basic principles, definitions and orientation for doing so. Although some specific requirements are proposed in this Regulation, others are more generally applicable and will provide the basis for more specific provisions. The following are the main provisions of this proposed Regulation: - principles, responsibilities and obligations on businesses to address the causes of food safety problems in a broad manner; - provisions addressing the organisational changes needed in relation to the provision of scientific opinions and the increased collaboration with the Member States that must be fostered in order for the best use of expertise to be made; - provisions responding to the commitment in the White Paper and providing the concrete basis for the functioning of the European Food Authority, detailing its mission, tasks, organisational arrangements and scope; - provisions relating to the most logical and effective arrangements for the collection and analysis of scientific and other data, the identification of emerging risks to health and the role of the Food Authority in a food safety crisis. It also establishes a rapid alert system for foods and feeds, which will integrate and improve the system; - finally, provisions aligning procedures and responsibilities where a serious risk to health has been identified in the European food supply whether the product originates within the Community or a third country.