Indication of the ingredients in foodstuffs

2001/0199(COD) - 06/09/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To abolish the 25% rule on listing compound ingredients in the labelling of food products. CONTENT: Food labelling legislation was consolidated under Directive 2000/13/EC. This Directive brought together all EU labelling legislation, previously laid out in Directive 79/112/EEC. In the White Paper on food safety however, the Commission announced its intention to propose an amendment to the recent Labelling Directive, relating to the current possibility of not indicating the components of compound ingredients which form less than 25% of the final product. Under current legislation, Article 6, paragraph 8 allows a compound ingredient to be included in the list of ingredients under its own designation, provided it is immediately followed by a list of its own ingredients. However such a list is not compulsory where the compound ingredient constitutes less than 25% of the finished product - except in the case of additives. The Community has latterly become increasingly concerned that consumers are being ill informed about the content of the food they are purchasing. This view is justified in light of recent trends. Firstly, food production has become more complex and people eat a lot more processed food. This development coincides with a number of food scares and which in turn serves to underline the need to keep consumers well informed on food content. Secondly, there has been a considerable increase in food allergens, which can take both mild and life threatening forms. Food products to which this applies include cow's milk, fruits, legumes (especially peanuts and soybeans), eggs, crustaceans, tree nuts, fish, vegetables (celery and other foods of the Umbelliferae family), wheat and other cereals. Moreover, recent studies indicate that in many cases labelling on these food allergens, particularly in a wide variety of prepared food, is often incomplete and often misleading. It is therefore imperative that all processed foods sold in the European Community be clearly labelled with the list of the ingredients and of the starting materials. In order to ensure the highest protection for consumers as well as offering them maximum choice, the Commission proposes the following changes to the existing Directive on food labelling: - to amend Directive 2000/13/EC by abolishing the 25% rule, - to establish a list of allergens which will have to appear on the labelling of foodstuffs; and - to remove the possibility of using the name of the category for certain ingredients.