

Beef: identification and registration of bovine animals, labelling of beef and beef products

1996/0229(CNS) - 05/02/1997

Labelling beef and beef products should be compulsory and should include specific information for the attention of consumers: this was the conclusion of the committee (chairman: Ken COLLINS (PSE, UK)) following the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) crisis. It rejected the Commission proposal for marking to be optional. The committee adopted the report by Mr Mihail PAPAYANNAKIS (GUE/NGL, EL) on the proposal to amend the Council regulation on the labelling of beef and beef products. The report emphasized the need to restore consumer confidence. The committee decided that this could be achieved if operators or organizations selling beef or beef products labelled their products correctly, in the same way as operators and organizations importing beef and beef products into the Community from third countries. The European Commission wished labelling to be optional due to the lack of data on livestock in most Member States and the need to comply with international trade agreements. In the proposal for a regulation, every operator or organization active in this sector would specify the information to be included on the label and the measures needed in order to guarantee its accuracy to the competent national authorities. This information would be limited to the place of origin of the animal, its sex, method of fattening, the date of slaughter and the age of the animal on slaughter and the methods of carcass disposal. However, the committee on consumer protection added to this list the breed of animal, any genetic engineering techniques performed on the embryo and other data on antibiotics and stimulants administered. The committee also amended the proposal so that, one year after the entry into force of the regulation, labelling requirements would be extended to processed goods containing beef or beef products. It also postponed the date of entry into force of the regulation from 1 January to 1 July 1997. The report was adopted under the consultation procedure. Nonetheless, the committee approved an amendment, against the Commission's advice, to base the proposal on Article 100 A of the treaty (internal market, codecision procedure) rather than Article 43 (agriculture, consultation procedure).