

Food additives other than colours and sweeteners

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Peaches and pineapples should not be glazed with beeswax to make them shinier, the Committee decided. Nor should a new additive be used to soften chewing gum. The committee was adopting a report by Mrs Hiltrud BREYER (Greens, D) on the Council's common position on a proposal amending an earlier directive (95/2/EC) listing permitted food additives. The committee attempted to strike a balance between protecting consumer interests while satisfying the needs of the food processing industry - for which the new legislation will have major implications - at a time when consumers demand fresh natural food but increasingly shop in supermarkets for food that has travelled long distances. Thus, against the rapporteur's wishes, the committee fell in with the Council's desire to lift additive restrictions on sterilized cream and to allow an additional acid to be used in sauces with an olive base. Nor did it object to the authorization of a new preservative in mascarpone cheese or to the addition of an agent intended to give a better head to draught cider. However, going along with Mrs Breyer, it drew the line at adding sulphur dioxide to marinated nuts and vacuum-packed sweetcorn or at using a kind of oxidized starch in weaning foods. It also opposed a Council attempt to loosen the additive restrictions on agents used to improve the baking quality of flour and dough. Of the 26 amendments adopted by Parliament at its first reading last October, the Council accepted 11 wholly and 4 in part. It also made some additional changes to the proposal in response to industry wishes. Many of the votes were close but the report as a whole, following amendment, was adopted by 16 votes to 10 with no abstentions.