

# Food additives other than colours and sweeteners: amending Annexes

1999/0158(COD) - 23/03/2000

The committee adopted the report (codecision procedure, first reading) by Paul LANNNOYE (Greens/EFA, B) modifying the Commission proposal amending an existing EC directive on food additives other than colours and sweeteners. The Commission was proposing to add a number of new additives to the list of those authorised under the directive, a move opposed by the committee. In particular, the committee was concerned about the use of sodium alginate, a firming agent for peeled, sliced, ready-to-eat, packaged carrots, which prevents a carrot's surface from turning white as a result of drying out and also prevents it from going soft. The committee unanimously took the view that treating food with sodium alginate would mislead the consumer as the food might appear fresher than it really was. Sodium alginate also had laxative qualities, which was another good reason not to use it. The Commission was criticised for being too lenient and was asked to apply the precautionary principle more rigorously to the manufacture of foodstuffs. It was imperative, MEPs said, that the criteria of "usefulness to the consumer" and "harmlessness" be taken very seriously. Apart from sodium alginate (E 401) the committee was against the Commission's proposals to add butane (E 943a), isobutane (E 943b) and propane (E 944) to the list. These gases are used as propellants for vegetable oil or water-vegetable oil emulsions, to grease containers for oven-cooking or to apply a mixture of spices or other flavourings to, for example, oven-ready pizzas. The committee wondered whether it was a good idea to authorise use of a propellant gas of fossil origin and with a high risk of explosion. It also expressed doubt about the use of ethyl hydroxyethyl cellulose as a stabiliser in gluten-free bread in Sweden and as a binding agent in batter coating for deep-frozen fish, pastries, cake mixes and confectionery.