

Beef: identification and registration of animals and labelling of beef

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The committee adopted the report (codecision procedure, first reading) by Mihail PAPAYANNAKIS (PES, GR) approving the Commission proposal with a large number of amendments. The committee thereby gave the green light to an EU-wide compulsory identification system for bovine animals and the labelling of beef and beef products, to be introduced by 1 September 2000. The committee felt that there should not be too much information on the label. Consumers would be informed more effectively if labels indicated the Member State or third country of origin, rather than the precise region of origin of the meat, as the Commission had proposed. Regarding imported beef from non-EC countries, it was stressed that the same labelling rules must be applied and, where not all the information was available, a clear indication to that effect should be provided. For third countries which could not provide reliable information, the label should indicate: "Origin: non-EC". As from 1 January 2003, labels should also mention antibiotics and stimulants that might have been administered as well as fattening methods used. Finally, the committee was against derogations from the regulation for minced beef, beef trimmings or cut beef, arguing that this was not in the interest of the public health objectives pursued.