

Health policy: animal by-products not intended for human consumption, animal proteins in animal feed

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The committee adopted the report by Marit PAULSEN (ELDR, S) amending the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). It called for much stricter rules than the Commission was suggesting, so as to restore public confidence in the food industry following the BSE and foot-and-mouth crises. The committee also wanted the regulation to enter into force quickly, and stressed that the temporary ban on the use of meat and bone meal in animal feed could not be lifted until the application of the regulation had begun. It therefore called for it to apply as from 1 January 2002, rather than 1 February 2003 as the Commission was proposing. The committee also argued that "recycling" (cannibalism) within a species, i. e. feeding pigs with by-products from pigs, should be prohibited on the basis of the precautionary principle - given that it was not yet known how prion diseases could arise - as well as on ethical grounds. The report stressed that the 3 categories of animal by-products proposed by the Commission must be kept strictly separate throughout the food chain in order to avoid cross-contamination and that it must be easy for the public, the media, or other organisations to inspect the system. In order to prevent Category 1 and 2 products entering the food chain, they should be marked with an odorant and a dye. The committee also adopted amendments aimed at ensuring that such products should not be exported to third countries, and said that the possibility of re-exporting by-products infected with salmonella should be limited and precisely regulated, not least on ethical and moral grounds. In addition, the committee called for catering waste to be brought within the scope of the regulation, as left-overs of illegally imported meat had proved to be the source of the foot-and-mouth outbreak in the UK in February 2001. On the question of disposal of animal waste material which would no longer be used in animal feed, including incineration, the report pointed out that the existing directive on waste incineration did not cover the incineration of animal carcasses and therefore proposed a number of technical provisions to remedy this. It also introduced a new derogation to allow burial of Category 1 material in very remote areas, where transport to the nearest approved burial site might be difficult. Lastly, since virtually all chemicals can be accumulated in fat (as in the 1999 dioxin scandal in Belgium), the committee called for fat to be separated out and treated in the same way as protein, so that only Category 3 fat would be used in the food chain.