

Food law, European Food Authority, and food safety

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The committee adopted the report by Phillip WHITEHEAD (PES, UK) substantially amending the Commission proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). First and foremost, the word "safety" was added to the name of the Authority on the grounds that this was its purpose. It would thus be called the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The committee also differed from the Commission on the role of the Authority and questions of risk assessment and risk management, transparency, the composition of the Management Board, the financing of the EFSA and the location of its headquarters. It argued that the members of the Management Board should be no more than 12 in number, including 2 from the food industry and 2 consumers' representatives. They should be proposed by the Commission following a process of open application. Not every Member State should have a representative on the Board. All appointments should be made on merit and be individually subject to confirmatory hearings by Parliament. Although risk assessment, risk communication and risk management could not be separated as easily as the Commission's proposal suggested, the committee saw risk assessment as being the duty of the EFSA and risk management as ultimately the province of the Commission. It was therefore at odds with the Commission over the Rapid Alert System (RAS) for food and animal feed, and wanted the day-to-day management of the system to be a task for the Commission rather than for the EFSA, as the Commission had proposed. The committee also set out its views on where the Authority should be located, saying the location should have a long-standing tradition in food safety, enhance the Authority's independence and integrity, provide a good scientific infrastructure and facilities in the field of food safety and also be easily accessible. Regarding the mission of EFSA, the report said it should include animal health and welfare, plant health, nutrition and matters relating to genetically modified organisms and the labelling of foodstuffs. The committee also adopted a number of more technical amendments.