Food and food ingredients treated with ionising radiation

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OBJECTIVE: approximation of legislation concerning foods and food ingredients treated with ionizing radiation in order to guarantee a high level of consumer protection and ensure the free movement of irradiated foods. SUBSTANCE: Scope: manufacture and marketing of foodstuffs treated with ionizing radiation, excluding certain hospital diets under medical supervision and foodstuffs exposed to ionization generated by low-dose measuring or inspection devices (less than 0.5 Gy at a maximum energy level of 5 MeV). It must be possible for foodstuffs correctly treated with ionizing radiation in accordance with the Directive to be marketed throughout the Community. An Annex to the Directive lists the categories of foodstuffs and sources of ionizing radiation which may be used (strawberries, papayas, mangoes, dried fruits, pulses, dehydrated vegetables, cereal flakes, bulbs and tubers, aromatic herbs, spices and vegetable seasonings, shrimps and prawns, poultrymeat, frog legs, gum arabic). Re-irradiation of foodstuffs is prohibited (except in certain cases where partial doses and a specific procedure are applied). The packaging of irradiated foodstuffs must carry certain indications: in the case of products not intended for sale to the ultimate consumer, the Directive makes provision for optional use of the logo shown in Annex III together with a statement that the food has been irradiated. Use of the logo may be reviewed once application of the Directive has proved effective; for other products, all the information required by Directive 79/112/EEC must be indicated; The Directive stipulates the procedures for the approval of irradiation facilities for foodstuffs by the competent authorities of the Member States and makes provision for the publication of a list of approved facilities in the Official Journal of the European Communities. Such facilities must keep a record showing, for each source of ionizing radiation used and for each batch of foodstuffs treated, the nature and quantity of foodstuffs irradiated, the batch number, the recipient, the date of irradiation, etc. These records must be kept for a period of five years. Third countries' facilities must comply with equivalent requirements, with the possibility of official inspections in those countries, if necessary by the Commission. The Directive stipulates that materials used for the packing of foodstuffs to be irradiated must be appropriate for the purpose. This aspect will be covered in more detail in a subsequent directive on packaging. Procedure: the Commission may amend the Directive to take account of technical progress, after consultation with the Member States and, where appropriate, the Standing Committee for Foodstuffs, on an advisory basis. If a Member State discovers that a foodstuff, although it has been treated in the correct manner, nevertheless presents a health risk, it will unilaterally suspend marketing and immediately inform the Commission, which must examine the risk forthwith and take the appropriate measures.