

Detergents

2002/0216(COD) - 25/03/2003

The committee adopted the report by Mauro NOBILIA (UEN, I) amending the proposal under the codecision procedure (1st reading). The amendments sought to tighten up the proposal, including stricter conditions on derogations from biodegradability rules and clearer labelling for consumers. The Commission was also urged to table a new legislative proposal with a view to phasing out phosphates, or restricting them to specific applications, three years after the regulation takes effect. In addition, the committee called for new proposals on testing for anaerobic biodegradation and the biodegradation of the product as a whole, these being the two elements of testing neglected by the Commission in its current proposal. The committee insisted that there must be only two conditions for granting a marketing derogation. Firstly, the detergents must be intended for specific industrial or institutional use, provided the volume of sales and use throughout the whole of EU territory is below that which would pose a threat to the environment and health. Secondly, an essential need for the detergent's use must have been shown, in particular in view of food safety or hygiene standards, and no safer alternatives must be available. The committee also specified that, if derogations are granted, industry should be able to demonstrate that safer alternatives are being developed and the need for a derogation should be reviewed after 5 years. On labelling, the committee adopted an amendment which would group the list of other substances together into categories that are better known than the individual components, thus making them easier for consumers to recognise. It argued that an excess of cryptic information on labels can lead to confusion, thus negating the original point of including it. It also wanted products covered by a derogation to be suitably labelled.