

Materials and articles intended to come into contact with food

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The committee adopted the report by Astrid THORS (ELDR, FIN) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. A number of the amendments were aimed at aligning the draft legislation with other pieces of legislation in the field of food safety, e.g. the directives on additives and labelling and the 2002 regulation establishing the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The committee also tabled amendments designed to clarify the authorisation procedure. It stated explicitly that the authorisation of a substance shall take place through the adoption of a specific measure and that the applicant has the right to be informed within 7 days if, despite a positive opinion by the EFSA, the Commission decides not to prepare a draft specific measure. In such cases, the Commission will also be required to provide the applicant with an explanation of the reasons for its decision. MEPs were also concerned to make it clear in the legislation that substances which mask the odour of food - and hence disguise the fact that the food is going bad - should not be considered as active materials and should not therefore be permitted. And, in a bid to avoid a bureaucratic nightmare, they stipulated that the labelling requirements set out in the regulation should not be obligatory for "any articles which, because of their characteristics, are clearly designed to come into contact with food". They argued that, without such an amendment, every single item of domestic ware, such as drinking glasses used in hotels, which are sold unpackaged would have to be marked with the symbols listed in Annex II. Lastly, the committee introduced a new article designed to ensure that the rules did not create trade barriers for food producers from developing countries who might not be able to find suppliers of packaging materials which conform to EU legislation. It proposed measures such as a phased introduction of the requirements for imported products and the sending of Community experts to developing countries to help set up traceability schemes.