Novel foods and novel food ingredients

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1) CONTENT 1. Novel foods and novel food ingredients were understood to mean foods produced using processes which gave rise to significant changes in their composition and/or nutritional value and/or intended use. Examples included proteins obtained from certain algae, products similar to non-metabolisable fats or fibre, genetically modified potatoes which were immune to viruses, tomatoes which lasted longer without rotting, or more efficient yeasts which fermented more rapidly. The regulation did not apply to food additives or to other food ingredients already covered by other specific Community legislation. 2. The aim was to establish a Community assessment procedure in order to determine whether these novel foods and novel food ingredients were suitable for human consumption. 3. The regulation established a system for notifying the Commission about any novel food or other food ingredient, accompanied by a scientific expert's report. In addition, where there were serious, scientifically justified doubts or where the food was consumed in the form of a living organism, provision was made for a compulsory authorisation procedure in which the Commission referred the matter to the Standing Committee for Foodstuffs. 4. The Scientific Committee for Food had to be consulted about any decision or rule concerning a novel food or food ingredient which was likely to have an effect on public health. 5. Member States were authorised to suspend or provisionally restrict the marketing and use on their territory of a novel food or food ingredient if they considered that its use presented risks to human health. They had to inform the Commission, which would give its opinion without delay and, if necessary, launch the authorisation procedure. 2) OBJECTIVE To introduce rules on certain novel food products not previously covered by specific legislation in most Member States, in order to prevent the creation of new national technical barriers to the free movement of those products in the internal market, and at the same time to protect consumers, whilst still taking account of future prospects in the biotechnology sector in Europe. Source: European Commission - Info92 08/95