Beef: identification and registration of animals and labelling of beef and beef products

1999/0205(COD) - 13/10/1999 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To amend the system for identifying and registering bovine animals and the labelling of beef products.

PROPOSED ACT: European Parliament and Council Regulation.

CONTENT: Regulation 820/97 states that the Commission must present proposals for the “general rules” governing beef labelling by 1 January 2000. This proposal is, therefore, being presented to the European Parliament and the Council in tandem with an accompanying proposal laying down the general rules for a compulsory beef labelling system. (Please refer to 1999/0204(COD)). In summary, the proposed Regulation on beef labelling, 1999/0204, establishes a compulsory system of beef labelling whereby operators and organisations marketing beef must provide certain information on labels attached to beef products. Information should include certain characteristics of the beef such as the beef’s origin, where it was born, reared and slaughtered etc. Compulsory labelling should be enforced by 1 January 2003. This proposal, when adopted, repeals Regulation 820/97.

The purpose of this proposal, 1999/0205, is to amend Regulation 820/97 by prolonging the existing provisions for labelling to take account of the time needed for the new proposal to be adopted under the co-decision procedure. Given that adoption of the first proposal is expected to take no longer than 14 months, the Commission proposes that the temporary prolongation should not run beyond 1 January 2001. Failure to adopt the amendment would result in a situation whereby the compulsory labelling system, based on Regulation 820/97, would come into force on 1 January 2000 with no general rules to guide it. Further, in prolonging the existing provisions set out in Regulation 820/97, an unsatisfactory and uncertain situation for beef consumers and beef operators would be avoided.

However, should the Council and Parliament fail to come to a decision before 31 December 1999, the Commission reserves the right to present to the Council an urgent proposal to be adopted by the end of 1999. Such a proposal would be made in order to avoid a legal void through the automatic lapse in the voluntary system.

Another feature of the proposal is that the Commission is proposing to change the legal basis of the proposal from Article 43 of the TEU to Article 153 of the new Treaty given that this Article has, as its objective, the protection of public health.