

Beef: identification and registration of animals and labelling of beef

1999/0204(COD) - 08/06/2000 - Commission communication on Council's position

The Commission's proposal aimed to lay down general rules for a compulsory system, in two separate phases which: introduce immediately a compulsory beef labelling system, obligatory in all Member States; and in the second phase, reinforce the compulsory beef labelling system. The Commission's view on the Council's Common Position on these five points is the following: - following the introduction of the Amsterdam Treaty, the Commission considers that Article 152 of the Treaty is the appropriate legal base for the Regulation, since it deals with measures in the veterinary field, which have as their direct objective the protection of public health. However, the Commission, acknowledging the judgement of the European Court of Justice on 4 April 2000, with regard to the legal base for Council Regulation 820/97/EC (Case C-269/97), and recognising Council's unanimous wishes to add Article 37, could accept a double legal base, provided that this did not undermine any of the Parliament's prerogatives, acquired under Article 152; - the compulsory indication of category of the animal from which the beef was derived was an element of the Commission's original proposal and constitutes an important indicator of quality of beef. In its amendments at first reading, the Parliament gave preference to limiting the labelling system only to the indications ensuring traceability. However, in view of the Common Position of the Council, and the benefits to the consumer of receiving such information on beef, the Commission supports the compromise offered by Council; - the Commission has always defended the view that the proposed beef labelling system should end when the full Community system begins. In view of the compromise solution offered by the Council, which retains certain elements of current national labelling systems demanded by the consumer, the Commission can agree to the Council's Common Position on this point; - the Commission has defended a cautious approach to the speed of introduction of the second phase of full origin labelling in the Community. However, taking account of the Parliament's wishes, a special effort has been made by starting the second phase on 01.01.2002, which is only four months after the Parliament's proposed date. This compromise solution is, therefore, acceptable to the Commission; - on the issue of the labelling of minced beef, the Council has shown in its Common Position a willingness to move towards the Parliament's position, which required much more strict labelling requirements for minced beef than originally proposed by the Commission. In the Commission's opinion, the Council's Common Position on this point provides a creditworthy solution that strikes a balance between consumer's right to guarantees over traceability and the necessity for a feasible system. In conclusion, taking into account the above-mentioned considerations, the Commission supports the Common Position adopted by the Council.