

Inspection of food: monitoring of substances and residues in live animals and meat

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In 1981, a Council directive banned the use of certain fattening hormones but gave Member States the option of authorizing the use of other hormones. In 1988, a directive was passed introducing a general ban on hormones in animal production, while allowing the use of natural hormones to be authorised for therapeutic and zootechnical purposes. Finally, the Member States were called on to harmonise their legislation on the monitoring of residues. However, an investigation carried out between May 1990 and January 1992 demonstrated that growth promoters (hormones and beta-agonists) were easy to obtain and that this was contributing to their illegal use. The investigation also showed that residues of antibiotics and sulfamides were frequently traced in intensively reared stock. On the basis of this finding, Parliament called in May 1993 for new Community legislation on the use of beta-agonists, for possession of banned substances to be punished and for all Community aid for livestock treated illegally to be suspended. The Commission proposal submitted for Parliament's approval contains measures to check for residues of substances with hormonal action or beta-agonists in livestock and their products. The Commission intends to achieve this by making producers and anyone involved in the food production chain responsible (pharmaceutical companies, veterinarians, abattoirs, dealers, wholesalers etc.). Adopting the report by Mr APOLIN RIO (PSE, P), Parliament approved this principle and called for help for groups of producers to develop self-regulating systems which guarantee that their meat is free from hormones. It also called, if it is proven that the owner or person in charge of the abattoir has helped to conceal the illegal use of banned substances, for Community aid to the guilty party to be suspended for a period of twelve months. Finally, it called for persons illegally in possession or using banned substances or illegally using authorised substances to be named and shamed in the specialist agricultural press and/or the national or regional daily press.