Food law, European Food Authority, and food safety

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PURPOSE : to lay down the general principles and requirement of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. COMMUNITY MEASURE : Regulation 178/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirement of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety. CONTENT : this Regulation provides the basis for the assurance of a high level of protection of human health and consumers' interest in relation to food, taking into account in particular the diversity in the supply of food including traditional products, whilst ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market. It establishes common principles and responsibilities, the means to provide a strong science base, efficient organisation arrangements and procedures to underpin decision-making in matters of food safety. The Authority established by this Regulation will be able to begin carrying out its activities immediately. In accordance with the Laeken European Council's Conclusions, these will begin in Brussels pending a general agreement on where the agencies' headquarters will be located. The creation of this new authority is one of the main political measures appearing in the White Paper on Food Safety published by the Commission in January 2000 and approved subsequently by the European Council. The mission of the Food Authority is to provide the Community with the independent scientific and technical advice it needs to support policy and legislation in all areas of food safety. It will contribute to providing a high level of public health protection while not neglecting animal health, plant preservation and environmental protection matters. The Authority's bodies (Management Board, Executive Director, Advisory Forum, Scientific Committee and scientific working parties) are designed to ensure its independence, its transparency and the scientific excellence of its opinions. They also provide for close cooperation with the competent bodies of Member States in the food safety field. The Authority's other tasks will be: - to identify and reconcile divergent scientific opinions at Community and Member State levels; - to ensure the public dissemination of reliable, objective and comprehensible information in all areas; - covered by its mission; - to collect and analyse data and identify emerging risks; - to establish a system of networks of bodies working in the food safety area. Besides creating the European Food Safety Authority, the Regulation defines the general principles and requirements of food law, the essential objectives of which are to ensure a high level of protection of human health, of the safety and interests of consumers and to ensure that the common market functions effectively. A rapid alert system for the allocation of a direct or indirect risk to human health deriving from food or feed is hereby established as a network. It shall involve the Member States-, the Commission and the Authority. The Authority shall be open to the participation of countries which have concluded agreements with the European Community by virtue of which they have adopted and apply Community legislation in the field covered by this Regulation. Lastly, before 1 January 2005 and every 6 years thereafter, the Authority, in collaboration with the Commission, shall commission an independent external evaluation of its achievements on the basis of the terms of reference issued by the Management Board in agreement with the Commission. ENTRY INTO FORCE : 21/02/2002. The Authority shall commence its operations on 1 January 2002.