

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

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OBJECTIVE: to establish a reliable system for the identification and registration of bovine animals with a view to restoring consumer confidence in their quality. **COMMUNITY MEASURE:** Council Regulation 820/97/EC establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products. **SUBSTANCE:** the Council finally adopted a single regulation based on Article 43 of the EC Treaty. The text provides for the introduction of the identification of all animals born after 1 January 1998 by two eartags and by passports or identification documents. This identification is to replace the system currently in force under Directive 92/102/EEC not later than 1 January 2000. Provision is made for derogations, specifically for animals born before 1 January 1998 and bulls. The identity of each animal and its movements will be recorded on a database in each Member State, and all information concerning the animal's movements will be recorded in a passport that will accompany the animal wherever it goes. Keepers of animals must also keep an up-to-date register in which they record detailed information on the bovine animals on their holdings. As regards the labelling of beef and beef products, a compulsory system will be introduced on 1 January 2000. However, this does not exclude the possibility of a Member State deciding to apply the system merely on an optional basis to beef sold exclusively in its territory. An optional labelling system will remain in force until 31 December 1999. It requires that, where an organization or operator decides to label its beef, a specification must be submitted for approval by the competent authority of the Member State where the production operations will take place or the products concerned will be sold. Until 31 December 1999 each label must at least bear an identification code which ensures a link between, on the one hand, the identification of the carcase, quarter or pieces of meat and, on the other hand, the individual animal or the animals concerned. The labelling system compulsory in all the Member States from 1 January 2000 must also require indication of the Member State or third country where the animal from which the beef is derived was born, the Member States or third countries where the animal was raised and the Member State or third country where it was slaughtered. However, Member States where there is a sufficiently developed identification and registration system for bovine animals may before 1 January 2000 impose a compulsory labelling system for beef from animals born, fattened and slaughtered in their territory. **ENTRY INTO FORCE:** 7 May 1997. The regulation applies from 1 July 1997.