Food and food ingredients authorised for treatment with ionising radiation

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The European Parliament adopted a report by Hiltrud BREYER (Greens/EFA, Germany) on the Commission's Communication. It welcomed the Commission's consideration of consumer and food industry opinions in finalising the Community list and the emphasis on consumer benefits, genuine technological need and avoidance of treatments which can be misused to substitute for good practice. It called on the Commission to collaborate with the World Health Organisation on research into the safety of irradiated foods. Any additions to herbs, spices and vegetable seasonings should only be permitted for irradiation in the EU as and when scientific knowledge suggests it is safe to do so. Before any proposal is submitted to add foodstuffs to the positive list, a detailed analysis must be carried out on each foodstuff, with evidence given to demonstrate that each of the conditions for authorising food irradiation in Annex I of Directive 1999/2/EC is clearly met. Parliament went on to ask the Commission to encourage the development and validation of safe and effective substitutes for chemical fumigation and methyl bromide for food disinfestation. The Commission should require annual random testing of food by all Member States to prevent illegally irradiated, unlabelled products from being sold. All results should be made publicly available with tough action against breaches of the law. The Commission must also enforce regular controls, including irradiation detection surveys, of potentially irradiated imported foodstuffs in all Member States, especially of foods imported from third countries that are known to make wide use of food irradiation, such as the US and Brazil. A mechanism of sanctions ought to be introduced into the Directives against food importers or manufacturers who fail to carry out adequate monitoring to ensure they are not supplied with illegal irradiated ingredients or products and against producers and importers who withhold relevant information. Parliament stressed that the short and long-term effects of eating a diet largely comprised of irradiated foods on children's health should be used as a reference for human health risk assessments, given the enhanced sensitivity of children to chemical exposure and depletion of nutrients in food. Dangerous processes should be substituted with safer processes. This should be a duty for food producers and processors in order to avoid risks to workers, human health and the environment.