

Pesticides: maximum levels of residue in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin (repeal. Directives 76/895/EEC, 86/362/EEC, 86/363/EEC, 90/642/EEC, amend. Directive 91/414/EEC)

2003/0052(COD) - 24/11/2004

The committee adopted the report by Robert STURDY (EPP-ED, UK) amending the Council's common position under the 2nd reading of the codecision procedure. It retabled a number of amendments adopted by Parliament at 1st reading, as follows:

- the aim of the regulation should be to set harmonised MRLs for pesticides in products of plant and animal origin "in order to protect all European consumers against possible health effects". For this purpose MRLs should be set at the "lowest reasonably achievable level" with the aim of ensuring the best possible consumer protection;
- Member States should publish on a quarterly basis all the results of national residue monitoring on the Internet. Where MRLs are exceeded Member States should be able to name the retailers, traders or producers concerned;
- herbal infusions should be subject to a separate assessment due to their many component parts;
- subgroups which may consume more of particular products must be fully protected;
- the definitions of certain terms used in the regulation should be clarified: "good agricultural practice" should entail integrated pest control in certain climate zones, as well as using the minimum quantity of pesticides and setting MRLs at the lowest level. In addition, the concepts of an "acute reference dose" (the amount of a substance in food that can be ingested over a short time without appreciable risk to the consumer) and of "acceptable daily intake" (the amount of a substance that can be ingested daily over a lifetime) should take account of "known cumulative and synergistic effects of the different plant protection products, as well as the higher vulnerability of children and the unborn";
- in the case of temporary MRLs, the precautionary principle should apply and they should be set at the lowest level that can be achieved in all the Member States on the basis of good agricultural practice.

MEPs also adopted an amendment intended as a compromise text on "import tolerance". At 1st reading Parliament had deleted a clause allowing for a higher MRL limit for imported products where "an existing Community MRL is not sufficient to meet the needs of international trade", arguing that the requirements of international trade should not override public health concerns. As the Council had reinstated the original text, the committee adapted the provisions to allow for a different MRL for imported products where "the existing Community MRL was set for reasons other than public health reasons for the specific product and specific use".