Basic information

1997/2092(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
Food law in the European Union. Green paper **Subject** 3.10.10 Foodstuffs, foodstuffs legislation	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection	GRAENITZ Ilona (PSE)	09/01/1996

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	HARDSTAFF Veronica Mary (PSE)	27/05/1997
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH Fisheries		

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)	2051	1997-11-27
Agriculture and Fisheries	2034	1997-10-20
Consumers	2038	1997-11-03
Health	2056	1997-12-04

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
30/04/1997	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1997)0176	Summary
16/05/1997	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
20/10/1997	Debate in Council		
03/11/1997	Debate in Council		

27/11/1997	Debate in Council		
04/12/1997	Debate in Council		
06/01/1998	Vote in committee		Summary
06/01/1998	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0009/1998	
09/03/1998	Debate in Parliament		
10/03/1998	End of procedure in Parliament		
06/04/1998	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1997/2092(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/4/08892

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0009/1998 OJ C 056 23.02.1998, p. 0003	06/01/1998	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0127/1998 OJ C 104 06.04.1998, p. 0022-0060	10/03/1998	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1997)0176	30/04/1997	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES1188/1997	29/10/1997	Summary

Food law in the European Union. Green paper

1997/2092(COS) - 10/03/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Ilona GRAENITZ (PSE, A) on the Green Paper on food law, the European Parliament called on the Commission to submit proposals for the adoption of a European food policy designed to ensure that food is healthy and of good quality and to introduce a general legal requirement to offer for sale only food which was safe, wholesome and suitable for human consumption. Accordingly, it called for clear principles to be formulated regarding the safety, health and labelling of foodstuffs by means of a framework directive. In Parliament's view, the prime objective must be to maintain a high level of protection. Consequently, foodstuffs authorized and placed on the market must accord with principles of quality, safety and preventive health protection. Parliament called on the Commission to adopt a coordinating structure to prevent the marketing of foodstuffs which posed a potential threat to the consumer, and to establish a food alert network and a system for the rapid withdrawal of products from the market. It called for the risk assessment unit whose establishment had been announced to work within an institutional system linking up the scientific committees, the product authorization authorities and the coordinated food alert system. On the subject of liability, it called on the Commission to dispel ambiguities and consider the possibility of persons being jointly and severally liable if the producer of the product can no longer be identified. Parliament regarded it as a fundamental principle that food producers be able to provide scientific evidence that their products pose no risk to consumers' health, and called for additional information to be provided concerning pre-production inputs used in agriculture (seeds, plant protection agents, fertilizers, animal feed, etc.) and for it to be ensured that the producers of these products accepted liability for them. It called on the Commission to submit a proposal on general liability for food safety and health, laying down clear rules concerning the producer's liability for food safety. All operators who fully complied with Community legislation should have means of appealing against any action brought against them on the basis of the directive on defective products. Within the framework of an integrated 'farm-to-table' approach to food safety and quality, Parliament called for environmental protection to be incorporated into food policy, the ultimate objective being sustainable food production. This concept should result in the provision of information about production and manufacturing methods. With regard to inspections, Parliament called on the Member States to incorporate Community law effectively into national law and to penalize those who committed fraud. It called for more funding for organic and sustainable farming, and for strict Community regulation of animal feedstuffs. It condemned the use of antibiotics on animals for prophylactic purposes, and called for a revision of Community rules on the use of antibiotics in animal feed in order to prevent any non-therapeutic use. Parliament also called for rules on the use and composition of artificial inputs to crop production such as pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers. It called on SMEs to familiarize themselves with the HACCP (hazard analysis and critical control point) system and called on the Commission to ascertain to what extent this system could be applied to small farms. It called for the standards applicable to foodstuffs produced in the Community and intended for the internal market also to apply to imports from third countries and exports to them. International trade in food products must not be developed at the expense of the protection of public health, animal welfare or the environment. The applicant countries must accept the link established between agricultural policy, public health policy and food policy. In the field of consumer information, efforts must be made to increase public awareness and educate consumers. Parliament called for clear and simple legislation on labelling and the establishment of new sources of information. In particular, it called for the Directive on the labelling of foodstuffs to be revised, and for a system to be developed for the precise identification of genetically modified foods or food ingredients and to provide full information about the ingredients suitable for consumption. This system should be based on derivation from genetic engineering techniques and not on arbitrary measurements of residues in the final product. Parliament called for the development of detailed Community criteria for labelling of foods and food ingredients produced without genetic engineering, as provided for in Recital 10 of the novel food Regulation and in line with the intended exclusion of the use of genetic engineering from organic agriculture. From the international point of view, Parliament called on the Commission and the Fifteen to assign priority to the safety of consumers and to ensure that WTO trade agreements and negotiations acknowledged the importance of legitimate consumer concerns, including ethical and religious concerns about certain methods of production. It called for greater consumer involvement in all stages of the Codex Alimentarius decision-making process. It called on the Commission on no account to lift the ban on meat treated with hormones and if necessary, as an emergency measure, to accept the need to pay fines and levies. It called on the Union to seek a review of the WTO agreement on health and plant-health measures in order to affirm that the precautionary principle and the imperatives of health and safety must take precedence over free trade.

Food law in the European Union. Green paper

1997/2092(COS) - 30/04/1997 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: to present a green paper on European legislation in the field of foodstuffs with a view to launching an in-depth debate within the Community institutions, the Member States and interested circles on the question of whether current food legislation meets the requirements of consumers, producers, processors and dealers. This consultation procedure should also determine: . if monitoring and inspection systems are operating satisfactorily; . how Community food legislation might be developed in the future. CONTENT: food legislation is an area of public interest. A high level of safety and public control are needed in order to ensure that food is safe and wholesome and that other consumer interests are properly protected. At present, most national laws governing foodstuffs were harmonized when the internal market and the common agricultural policy were established. In particular, quality standards have been adopted for a good number of agricultural foodstuffs. However, there is at present no general legislative text which clearly defines the fundamental principles and obligations of the parties concerned in the field of foodstuffs. The purpose of the Commission's green paper is therefore to collect comments from interested circles on a series of questions. For example: - Can the same general rules be applied to agricultural production and the agro-foodstuffs industry despite the differences between these two sectors? - Should the principle of the responsibility of the producer for defective products be extended to primary agricultural production? - What is the best way of applying the principle of subsidiarity to foodstuffs legislation (with a clear definition of "foodstuffs")? - How can the independence and objectivity of scientific advisors and committees be guaranteed? - How can we ensure that markings and labelling contain information of relevance to the consumer without being overly detailed? The interested circles, the Community institutions and the national authorities are called on to send their observations on the questions raised in the green paper to the Commission by 31 July 1997. The Commission will decide on the action needed in this area on the basis of the comments received. This action may include: . presenting a proposal for a general directive on Community foodstuff legislation; . strengthening or amending existing legislative provisions. Elements of this new legislation: 1) The Commission considers that in-depth consultation with the social partners when food legislation is drafted is a good way of ensuring that it will meet its objectives. The social partners could be encouraged to participate more actively in the evaluation of the costs and benefits of the proposed new legislation. 2) It also considers that using regulations rather than directives would enhance the transparency of the legislation and avoid problems of late and incorrect transposition into national law (although the directive will still be the instrument of choice for the framework legislation). 3) With regard to hygiene, the Commission considers that the first priority must be to ensure that there is a coherent set of Community rules. The best way of achieving this would be to apply common principles in a generalized manner and limit standardizing regulations to cases in which they are deemed indispensable. Regulations relating to food hygiene must be designed and implemented

with sufficient flexibility to guarantee a high level of protection without imposing unnecessary charges on enterprises. 4) With regard to labelling, binding rules should allow consumers easy access to essential information on foodstuffs. A proper balance needs to be found which will guarantee that consumers obtain all the relevant information while avoiding overly detailed requirements. 5) The existence of independent, authoritative opinions is of prime importance. Measures should be taken to allow centralized coordination of the number, scope, composition and activities of scientific committees, in order to guarantee a high level of competence and perfect coherence of scientific opinion. Everything needs to be done to ensure that scientific conclusions are presented in a clear and convincing manner. In addition, consumer concerns need to be taken into account during the decision-making process. 6) With regard to producers' responsibility, legislation must clearly define responsibilities at all levels (producers, processors, distributors and retailers) for the supply of safe, wholesome food fit for human consumption, of a given quality and duly identified, and the responsibilities of the relevant control bodies. Extending the directive on responsibility for defective products to primary agricultural production would increase the overall level of consumer protection. However, the Commission considers that this extension is no substitute for the implementation of suitable rules on the safety of products and official control systems. 7) The penalties for which provision is made in the event of infringement of Community legislation on the internal market should be equivalent to the penalties laid down at national level, i.e. they should be effective, proportionate and dissuasive. In order to guarantee that the rules imposed are implemented, the Commission considers that greater recourse should be taken to standing committees when examining questions relating to the interpretation of Community legislation and studying unforeseen problems which arise when it is implemented.

Food law in the European Union. Green paper

1997/2092(COS) - 29/10/1997 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The Committee sees the Green Paper as a valuable basis for discussions and as an opportunity to make European food legislation more transparent and more efficient. In the general comments it points out: - the need for a comprehensive, integrated EU food policy as well as the need for a general directive on food; - the importance of strengthening Articles 129 and 129(a) of the Amsterdam Treaty to give consumers a firm guarantee that health problems take precedence over economic interests; the need for a strict application of the precautionary principle and a clear commitment to the principle of preventative health and consumer protection; - the fact that legislative and other provisions must be as simple as possible and only go into detail where necessary; - the great importance of continuing to secure the free movement of goods.