

To: Interested Parties

11 November 2008

Reference: LRM/006/097

European Commission's Proposal for a Food Information Regulation Council Working Group meeting – 20 October 2008

Dear Interested Party

The latest meeting of the Council Working Group on the Food Information Proposal took place on 20 October at which the general labelling aspects of the proposal for a Food Information Regulation were discussed.

This meeting continued the first read through the proposal, picking up from Article 36. Good progress was made with discussions focussing on technical amendments to the Commission text and calls for proposed amendments to the text from Member States.

The main points of discussion where:

- **(Mandatory) National Provisions** – this article maintains existing rules, but additionally allows Member States to introduce mandatory rules on country of origin subject to set criteria. The Commission clarified that this would be without prejudice to DG AGRI legislation on EU protected food names e.g. PGI/PDO.
- **Labelling of non-prepacked food** – There was general agreement that this article needed to be revised to maintain the *status quo* of Member states deciding on whether to introduce national rules for loose foods (including caterers) and pre-packed for direct sale. Allergen information, however would be mandatory in all cases, although Member States wanted the flexibility to decide how this allergy information is presented (i.e. not necessarily on the label) to keep any burden to a minimum.
- **(Voluntary) National Schemes** – This article generated a lot of debate. There was some opposition to this article, citing that complementary forms of labelling should correspond to a harmonised approach adopted by comitology rather than national schemes. There were also a number of concerns with the current text that



would need to be addressed. How would the idea of the application of a logo/symbol on foods in compliance with a Member State's best practice guidance be applied?

- **Definitions** – there were some discussions on the technical definitions. A number of changes were tabled, but the list of definitions will be reviewed as negotiations progress.

You may recall from my last letter that the UK was asked to chair a mini group meeting with Member State representatives to discuss ideas on how to address the issue of clarity. Whilst there was no support for a minimum font size of 3mm, the mini group discussed the need for a measurable, and therefore enforceable, criterion, coupled with the other factors that affect clarity, such as contrast, layout and line spacing. The UK has been tasked by the French Presidency to draft a new Article 14, taking into account Member States views and circulate this to Member States ahead of the next meeting.

Next Steps

The next Council Working Group meetings are scheduled for 14 and 26 November 2008. The Presidency is then expected to present a progress report to the Health Council in December.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Pugh

IMPORTANT – due to the frequency of Council Meetings in relation to this proposal, we intend to send all future update letters via e-mail only. If you have not already provided us with your e-mail address, please send it to the following address:

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