

To: Interested Parties

19 March 2009

Reference: LRM/006/097

**European Commission's Proposal for a Food Information Regulation
Council Working Group meetings – 26 January 2009 & 27 February 2009**

Dear Interested Party

The latest meetings of the Council Working Group on the Food Information Proposal took place on 26 January and 27 February 2009. These were the first under the Czech Presidency and continued discussion on the proposal for a Food Information Regulation. Please note a further meeting was held on 12 February, which focussed on nutrition labelling and has been reported separately.

The main points of discussion were:

26 January

- **National (Voluntary) Schemes** – Debate continues on article 44, with the UK seeking to simplify it. While the Commission supported this, there was still no consensus view.
- **Clarity** – A proposal was tabled introducing a minimum font size based on the 'x' height (essentially the height of a lower case 'x') and a list of other factors that affect clarity in an annex. There are also calls for 'significant contrast between the print and background', on a mandatory basis. While this was generally welcomed, the proposed text will need further debate.
- **Country of origin labelling** – this remains a key area of contention. Member States fall into two opposing groups, those that support mandatory origin labelling and those that support the continuation of voluntary origin labelling (and tightening of rules on how this is provided).
- **Responsibilities** – This article stipulates the responsibilities of food business operators at each stage of the food chain. Suggested amendments have been put forward to clarify this article. However, no consensus view was reached.

27 February

This meeting covered both general and nutrition aspects of the proposal. The Presidency tabled a number of proposals that formed the basis of discussions. There was a good exchange of views, but no firm conclusions.

- **Responsibilities** – There was continued debate on article 8, with general agreement on the principles of the article. Although the precise form of words needs further discussion.
- **Labelling of Non-prepacked Food** – New wording for article 41 had been circulated. Member States were generally supportive of the text, maintaining the current approach and ensuring burdens on food business operators were kept to a minimum.
- **Nutrition labelling** - There was further discussion on forms of expression and expression on a per portion basis (Articles 31 and 32) as well as on the presentation of the nutrition declaration (Article 34). There was also a short discussion on the Articles related to the interplay with other legislation including the Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation (1924/2006) and the Regulation on the addition of vitamins and minerals and of certain other substances in foods (1925/2006). These issues will be further addressed in future meetings.

European Parliament

Discussion on the Proposal took place in the European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, on 16 March. In light of the number of amendments tabled to the Commission proposal, the Committee voted to ask the rapporteur, Renate Sommer, to look at her report again taking into account the amendments tabled to her first report.

With the European Parliament elections scheduled for June this year, discussions will continue under the new Parliament.

Next Steps

Meetings have been scheduled for 27 March and 27 April 2009 to continue discussions.

Yours faithfully



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