

Processed Meats Require COOL, Says EU Food Safety Group

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EU - Meat used as an ingredient in processed foods, such as lasagne, should carry Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) as is already the case for fresh beef, says Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee.

The MEP's call on the European Commission, which published a report on the issue in late 2013, to come up with legislative proposals in order to rebuild consumer confidence in the wake of the horsemeat scandal and other food fraud cases.

The resolution, passed by 48 votes to 15 with four abstentions, urges the Commission to follow up its 2013 report with legislative proposals to make it mandatory to state the country of origin of meat used in processed foods, in order to ensure more transparency throughout the food chain and better inform European consumers.

MEPs reiterate their concern over the potential impact of food fraud on food safety, consumer confidence and health, the functioning of the food chain and farm produce prices. They emphasise the importance of rapidly restoring the confidence of European consumers.

Empowering consumers

MEPs point out that the European Commission's own report acknowledges that more than 90 per cent of consumer respondents consider it important that meat origin should be labelled on processed food products. This is one of the several factors that may influence consumer behaviour, MEPs say.

Impact on prices

MEPs also point out that estimates of the measure's likely impact on prices, based on the findings of research done by the French consumer organisation "Que Choisir", diverge widely from those in Commission's report, and ask for a clearer picture. The evaluation should be carried out in conjunction with consumer organisations and would not delay legislative proposals, they add.

These proposals should enable European businesses to operate in an economically viable manner and in conditions compatible with the consumer's purchasing power.

Next steps

The resolution is to be discussed along with an oral question to the Commission, and put to a plenary session vote in February.

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