



PRESS RELEASE

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European Commission disregards Single Market for food by allowing French 'test' on mandatory origin labelling

FoodDrinkEurope deeply regrets the decision by the European Commission announced yesterday to allow the French authorities to introduce a 2-year trial period for the mandatory labelling of origin for milk and meat ingredients in foods.

Whilst the initiative is framed as a "test" and applies only to France, it is a mandatory measure which will have an immediate market impact, with considerable negative consequences for producers and for consumers, namely burdensome changes in the supply chain, difficulties in the labelling process and higher prices. Moreover, of crucial importance in today's context for Europe, this protectionist measure also sets an irreversible precedent for the fragmentation of the EU Single Market for foods and drinks.

"By accepting the pilot proposed by France, the Commission implicitly accepts that there is a quality difference between French produce and, for example, Belgian, German, Italian, and Spanish produce, even if sourced only a few km across the border", declared Mella Frewen, Director General of FoodDrinkEurope. "This blatantly ignores the market reality that food supply chains do not stop at country borders but are for the greatest part European, so that a steady quality and availability can be guaranteed for the best possible price for over 500 million consumers every day." Also, the Commission's green light is likely to lead to unnecessary food waste and higher consumer prices, despite concluding in its own reports¹ that consumers would generally not be willing to pay more for origin information.

FoodDrinkEurope is particularly disappointed that the Commission has not informed stakeholders of the evidence that France should have provided to demonstrate a link between "*certain qualities of the food and its origin or provenance*"; we note that keeping this process transparent for all stakeholders is a legal requirement under the Food Information to Consumers Regulation².

FoodDrinkEurope urgently calls on political leaders at national and European level to promote the high quality of European foods and drinks globally rather than creating obstacles and supply chain inefficiencies within the Single Market.

¹ Commission report regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for milk, milk used as an ingredient in dairy products and types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry meat: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk/origin-labelling/com-2015-205_en.pdf; Commission report regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for meat used as an ingredient: http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/docs/labelling_legislation_com_2013-755_en.pdf

² Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (Art. 39 and 45)

Note to the editors:

FoodDrinkEurope is the organization of Europe's food and drink industry, the largest manufacturing sector and leading employer in the EU and a key contributor to its economy (286 000 companies, 99% SMEs, 4.2 million employees).

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