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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COMMON MARKET COUNCIL TO ACT ON STANDARDIZING LEGISLATION ON USE OF PRESERVATIVES IN FOODS

WASHINGTON, D.C., Feb. 20 -- The Commission of the European Economic Community (Common Market) has just submitted to the EEC Council of Ministers a draft directive on steps to be taken toward standardization of the six member countries' legislation governing preservatives used in foodstuffs.

The directive, which establishes a single list of preservatives to be used to protect food against deterioration, is based mainly on the Council directive adopted in October 1962 on the harmonization of member states' laws on use of coloring material in food products.

The new directive applies to foodstuffs and preservatives imported into the Community, as well as to Community products. When it enters into force, the member states will have one year in which to amend their laws and two years in which to apply the directive fully.

An annex to the directive includes a list of authorized preservatives -- including those which may be mixed in foodstuffs and those which may be used solely on the surface. The directive also contains provisions on the general purity requirements which authorized preservatives must fulfil and conditions under which food may be smoke-cured. It does not affect the provisions of national legislation concerning certain food products with other uses (such as vinegar, sugar, and alimentary oils), products used for coating (except paraffin wax), products for combatting organisms harmful to plant life, antibacterial products for use in drinking water, and anti-oxidant products.

Packaged preservatives will have to be marked in specified ways.

The standard list of preservatives contained in the draft directive was prepared with the following principles in mind:

- a) protection of public health;
- b) protection of the consumer against fraud;
- c) practical economic requirements.

The draft was drawn up with the help of a scientific committee and of experts from the governments of the member countries. The Union of Industries of the European Community and the Consumers' Liaison Committee were also consulted.