



# Consumer Voice

Newsletter on food safety, health and consumer policy  
from the Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection

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David Byrne,  
Commissioner for  
Health and  
Consumer Protection

This is the first edition of our new electronic newsletter, *Consumer Voice*, covering all of the policy areas of my Directorate-General's responsibilities. These are wide ranging, but fall into three broad categories: food safety, public health, and consumer protection. It is part of the European Commission's drive towards making the range of initiatives undertaken on behalf of our citizens more readily accessible. I am personally committed to providing information on all of our activities in the most transparent manner possible.

The newsletter brings together into one publication our two paper publications, *Prevention* and *Consumer Voice*. In the past, *Prevention* dealt exclusively with health issues, and *Consumer Voice*, which began as a consumer-specific magazine, later expanded its brief to take on food safety issues as well as other topics of broader interest. I hope you will like the new integrated publication.

Published monthly, the new *Consumer Voice* will be available on our web site and will be sent to those of you who need it quickly in a text version by e-mail. It will be published in English, and within days, also in French and German. In contrast to the previous magazines that were published in a limited number of paper copies delivered by post, this will get to you more frequently and more speedily.

We do not plan to swamp you with large quantities of information in this newsletter, but to touch on and give background to our legislative, administrative, scientific and political decision-making. Links throughout will take you directly to our web site where you can access more in-depth information on any of the issues described.

A feature of *Consumer Voice* that was particularly appreciated was views from outside the Commission. We still want to hear what you think and, where we can, we will air them in the newsletter. So do please continue to share your views with us by post or by e-mail.

## Tough Measures will Come Into Force Against TSEs in July

On 1 July 2001, Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the Council and the European Parliament on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) will enter into force in the Member States. From that date, the new regulation will take the place of current safeguard measures on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) that have been taken over the years based on Commission decisions. The regulation is now the legal framework of the Community to combat animal and public health risks resulting from TSEs. It is the first legislation on BSE which was agreed with the full involvement of the European Parliament and it will be directly applicable in all Member States.

Moving beyond the well known provisions such as the meat and bone meal (MBM) ban to ruminants or testing of cattle, some new elements have been incorporated (see box). 'Our combat of BSE is based on the sound scientific advice given to the Commission from the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC). Our new safety law maintains the highest level of protection of public health and will be continuously reviewed,' Commissioner David Byrne says. He regards as especially important the introduction for the first time of a systematic approach to testing of sheep for scrapie to get more detailed information on that animal disease.

This particular measure becomes part of the TSE Regulation through the new framework for harmonised rules that are aimed at the control and eradication of BSE in cattle, sheep and goats. Mandatory surveillance will be required throughout the EU as will new notification methods, restrictions on movements of suspect animals and herds, culling and disposal requirements for infected animals or animals that could have been exposed to the same source of infection.

There will also be new requirements to be met by third countries who export live cattle and products of animal origin to the EU from the 1 October 2001. They will need to provide certification that an effective mammalian MBM ban is in place on feed for ruminants and show full traceability for each animal back to the herd and dam. Some additional BSE restrictions will apply to a range of new products of animal origin that are imported into the EU, especially tallow, gelatine and petfood. Specified risk materials such as spinal cord and brain must be removed from these products. Third countries where the BSE Geographical BSE risk level is assessed as level 1 (BSE highly unlikely) will be exempt from the requirements.

### Additional BSE eradication measures

- A reduction of the age for mandatory BSE testing of cattle in the high-risk group. Instead of testing at 30 months, cattle will be tested at 24 months.
- Random TSE testing will be carried out on sheep and goats.
- The current ban on feeding animal protein to farm animals will remain in force.
- New culling and disposal requirements for infected animals and animals potentially exposed to the same source of infection
- Full herd slaughter can still be applied on a voluntary basis but slaughtering of feed and birth cohort is obligatory.
- Tougher rules for imports from third countries

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**Animal by-products**

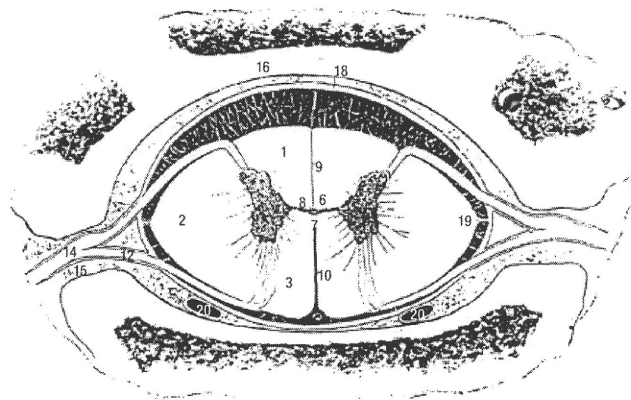
Animal by-products are divided into three categories:

- **Category 1** is the highest risk category and includes animal by-products suspected of being or infected by a TSE- and dioxin-contaminated material. This material must be destroyed;
- **Category 2** includes material presenting risks relating to animal diseases other than TSEs and could be recycled to produce biogas and fertilisers;
- **Category 3** is confined to by-products from healthy animals. Only products from this category would be allowed in the production of feed and pet food.

Categories 1 and 2 will be marked with an odorant and a dye to prevent such materials entering the food chain.

■ **Temporary suspension**

The current temporary suspension of the use of processed animal protein in animal feed, brought in following the BSE crisis, will expire on 30 June 2001. The Council has agreed to extend this ban as part of a Commission proposal updating the new Regulation on the prevention, control and eradication of TSE from 1 July.



▲ A specified risk material: Cross-section of spinal cord in situ, Enlarged and Part Schematic

Cross Section of a spinal cord: 1. Dorsal Column; 2. lateral column; 3. ventral column; 4. dorsal horn; 5. ventral horn; 6. gray commissure; 7. white commissure; 8. central canal; 9. dorsal septum; 10. ventral fissure; 11. dorsal nerve-root; 12. ventral nerve-root; 13. spinal ganglion; 14. spinal nerve; 15. intervertebral foramen; 16. arch of vertebra; 17. epidural space; 18. dura matter; 19. ligamentum denticulatum; 20. longitudinal venous sinuses; 21. middle spinal artery; 22. body of vertebra.

(Graph taken from "The anatomy of the Domestic Animals" by Septimus Sisson, S.B., V.S., D.V.Sc.)

The full text of the Commission Proposal (COM)2001/345 laying down transitional measures to permit the change-over to (EC)Regulation No 999/2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, and amending Annexes VII and XI of that Regulation, can be found on: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001\\_0345en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001_0345en01.pdf)

## Stringent controls for the use and disposal of animal by-products

The Agriculture Council followed through on the Swedish Presidency intention to reach a common position on the question of which animal by-products can be allowed to enter the animal feed chain on 19 June. Political agreement on the Commission's proposed Regulation means stringent requirements will be set for the safety of animal feed. Additional precautionary measures will also govern animal materials that do not enter the feed chain. The aim is to prevent the kind of feed-borne crises such as BSE and dioxin contamination that have occurred in recent years.

The proposal prohibits the recycling of dead animals and condemned material in animal feed. The only animal material allowed to be used for the production of animal feed would then be material derived from animals declared fit for human consumption following veterinary inspection. The proposal also addresses the quality of feed ingredients that can be allowed for farm animal nutrition and on the safe disposal of BSE-infected animal material. It introduces a number of alternative methods for the use or disposal of animal by-products and strengthens rules on the controls and traceability of them.

The European Parliament also dealt decisively with this proposal when it voted by a majority of 495 votes to endorse the measures on 12 June. Amendments agreed by the MEPs strengthened rather than changed the original Commission proposals for a regulation, tightening some provisions and adding additional flexibility for special circumstances, for example feed for those animals that do not enter the food or feed chain.

Since 1994, intraspecies recycling, or cannibalism, has been prohibited for ruminants but the EP voted to extend this prohibition to other animal species. The EP also amended the proposed regulation, to include a requirement already contained in transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) regulation, establishing that specified risk material (i.e. material most at risk of carrying TSE agents) should be dyed or marked in a way that can be both seen and smelt.

The full text of the Commission proposal for a European Parliament and Council regulation laying down the health rules concerning animal by-products not intended for human consumption (co-decision procedure) (COM(2000) 574-C5-0539/2000/0259(COD)) can be found on: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/bse/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/bse/index_en.html).

## European Food Authority Moving Towards 2002

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) made their strong support evident for Commission proposals for a European Food Authority (EFA) and for improvements to the general principles and requirements of European food law in Strasbourg on 12 June. Adopting amendments to the Commission text, the EP position marks a defining moment in the development of the plans for the EFA. As a co-decision procedure between the EP and the Council, the proposal is now ready to move on to the Council, where final touches and adjustments will turn the proposals into reality in 2002.

Commissioner David Byrne, who took part in the debate prior to the vote in Strasbourg, told the MEPs how much he appreciated Parliament's support for the new Food Authority, saying he could support many of the amendments, but could not agree with all of them.

Meanwhile, the Council as co-legislator, has also been working hard on the text under the Swedish Presidency. The Council, together with their own amendments, have taken on board a significant number of EP suggestions. The Presidency plans to reach political agreement on the text by the end of June.

From the 1 July, the Belgian Presidency has the establishment of EFA as one of its top priorities. It is anticipated that another legislative phase of work will be completed by the end of the year, thereby enabling the Authority to commence operations on schedule.

The full text of the Commission proposal for a European Parliament and Council regulation laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Authority, and laying down procedures in matters of food, can be found on: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/dat/2000/en\\_500PC0716.html](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/dat/2000/en_500PC0716.html)

## In Brief

### Citizens Input to Commission Thinking on Food Quality

To hear what individuals think and what their concerns are about food quality in Europe, Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne and Agriculture and Rural Development and Fisheries Commissioner Franz Fischler went 'live' over the internet on 6 June. From all over Europe, participants 'chatted' with the Commissioners in whichever of the eleven official EU languages they felt comfortable in. You will find raw transcripts of the interchange in the eleven languages on: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/chat/fischler-byrne/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/chat/fischler-byrne/index_en.htm), and before the end of June, edited transcripts will be made available in French, English and German.

### New Directive on Tobacco Advertising

The question of how to protect the young against the dangers of tobacco and alcohol, and indeed how to protect the health of all citizens, against such "health determinants", formed the major body of discussions during the Health Council meeting in Luxembourg on June 5. Proposals from the Commission, amended to include European Parliament

### ■ EFA, a flagship project

The EFA is a flagship project for the Community and its importance was reflected at the Nice Summit in December 2000 where the Heads of State of member state Governments called for it to be operational at the beginning of 2002. For that aspiration to become reality requires a great deal of effort and discussion within all of the EU institutions. That effort has been unstinting during the months of 2001, as the institutions have worked hard to iron out various sticking points.

### ■ Support from the EP

The European Parliament resolution supported the Commission proposals and, in addition, made a large number of amendments to them. It was adopted by 491 votes in favour of the amended proposals with 5 voting against. There were 21 abstentions.

The European Parliament sees its role as one that will 'refine the proposal and specify the Agency's terms of reference'. In full agreement with the Commission proposal that the primary role of the EFA will be food safety the EP wants to ensure that the Authority will have a proper budget available to it, so that EFA can be effective in achieving its targeted aims.



▲ On 6 June 2001, David Byrne, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, and Franz Fischler, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural development and Fisheries, held an internet chat on Food Quality in Europe.



#### ■ Push for increased budget for health

The European Parliament in its report, recommended further strengthening of the proposal and an increased budget to carry out the work. The Council recommendation of €280 million represents a reduction rather than an improved budget for health. The proposal will now go to the next phase of the co-decision procedure before final adoption. Nevertheless, it is clear that public health improvements are on the fast track to being implemented.

#### ■ WHO convention on tobacco control

Based on a report from the Commission on negotiations within the World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Council conclusions affirm strong support for the Community commitment to the negotiation process and eventual implementation of the convention. As tobacco and tobacco products are internationally traded, the Council considers an international response is vital.

views, were adopted and Council conclusions agreed on a number of safeguards and actions that should be implemented to protect public health.

Foremost among them is a new Directive on tobacco advertising, proposed by the Commission. If adopted, it will replace Directive 98/43/EC on tobacco advertising that was annulled in October 2000 by the European Court of Justice, on the grounds that its scope went too far. Most Member States have far-reaching prohibitions on tobacco advertising in place and the proposal aims to harmonise these regulations. At the same time, the proposal looks for a high standard of health protection for EU citizens. It will outlaw tobacco advertising in the print media and will prohibit advertising of tobacco products on the radio and on Internet.

For full text of the proposal go to: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/index_en.html)

### Fast Forward for the Public Health Agenda

The Health Council adopted a Common Position that gives backing to a Commission proposal for a new public health programme. However, they compromised on the budget, recommending only €280 million over six years, instead of the €300 million originally proposed by the Commission or the more ambitious €380 million recommended by the European Parliament.

The programme represents a solid foundation for health protection measures to be carried out over a six year period and it will replace the existing eight EU public health programmes. Moving away from the disease-oriented approach of the past, the proposal aims towards a reorientation of the way the EU carries out its activities in the field of public health. The strategies set out are broad in scope, but specific in actions.

The amended Commission Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council adopting a programme of Community action in the field of public health (2001-2006) COM (2001)302 final 2001/0119 (COD) can be found on: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/en\\_501PC0302.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/en_501PC0302.pdf)

### Protecting young people from the dangers of alcohol

A Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol, particularly by children and young people, proposed by the Commission, was adopted by the Health Council. It is for specific actions that reflect and complement the thinking implicit in the public health programme. The proposal calls for special actions to be taken in the Member States for comprehensive health promotion policies with regard to alcohol. The Council in its conclusions spoke of the recommendation as 'a first step in the development of a core comprehensive approach across the Community'.

The amended Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the drinking of alcohol by children and adolescents, including all the recommendations, COM(2001)310 final 2001/1801 (CNS) can be found on: [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001\\_0310en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001_0310en01.pdf)