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Mandatory origin labelling of processed meat

Greens/EFA call the Commission to legislate for more transparency and better consumer information

On Wednesday 11 February, the European Parliament will vote a resolution initiated by the Greens/EFA Group on mandatory country of origin labelling of meat in processed food (such as ready-to eat lasagne, nuggets, pizza etc).

This issue has been a long-standing demand of the Greens and the European Parliament and showed its relevance again in early 2013, when the horsemeat scandal shone the spotlight on the lack of transparency in our food supply chain.

90% of EU consumers want to know where their meat comes from. So, as Greens, our main argument for labelling the country of origin of meat, both processed and unprocessed, is to meet consumers' demands and enable them to make informed choices -such as avoiding food that has been transported long distance – and move towards a more transparent supply chain. Labelling the origin of meat used as an ingredient would help ensure better traceability along the food supply chain and help avoid fraud when food business operators choose their suppliers and products.

The draft resolution voted so far in the Environment Committee on 21 January, calls on the Commission to "follow up its report, presented in December 2013 with legislative proposals making the indication of the origin of meat in processed foods mandatory, in order to ensure more transparency throughout the food chain and to better inform European consumers, while taking into account its impact assessments and avoiding excessive costs and administrative burdens".

Opponents of the resolution argue that mandatory labelling would increase production costs for the food industry and would consequently raise consumer prices. But for processed meat, cost increase estimates seem to have been exaggerated. Transparency has only a limited impact on prices.

The Greens/EFA group hopes MEPs will support this renewed call for mandatory country of origin labelling of processed meat and that the Commission will finally bring forward legislation to this end.

Knowing about the origin of processed meat would be a first positive move towards a reform of our currently dysfunctional agri-food system.

As Greens we also care about animal welfare and the way food is produced and hope the EU will also

consider these aspects in future labelling policies.

See also the Country Of Origin Labelling (COOL) campaign by BEUC and the Labelling Matters campaign on method of production labelling for animal-derived food.

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