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Novel Foods

Greens won't mess with citizens' health and freedom of choice

Novel food is defined as food that has not been consumed to a significant degree by humans in the EU prior to 1997, when the first Regulation on novel food came into force. For the Greens/EFA, this weak definition should be improved.

There are also real concerns about the impacts of these new types of foods on human health, the environment and animal welfare and we argue that the precautionary principle must be honoured.

Besides, reports have raised the difficulty to assess the extent to which engineered nanomaterials are already being used in the food and agriculture sectors. The food industry stays very secretive on the issue. This lack of transparency clearly impacts consumer's freedom of choice.

On 24 November 2014, the European Parliament's environment committee voted on proposals to revise EU rules on novel foods, foods or foodstuffs that only recently started being consumed.

The Greens hailed the outcome of the committee vote, which included key green demands: a clearer definition of novel food and a moratorium on 'nano-foods' until there are specific risk assessment methods in place enabling the European Food Safety Authority to assess the use of nano-materials in food. The vote also called on the Commission to address the use of nano-materials in food packaging and ensure only approved substances can be used in packaging. The environment committee called for the labelling of food from descendants of cloned animals until the new rules enter into force.

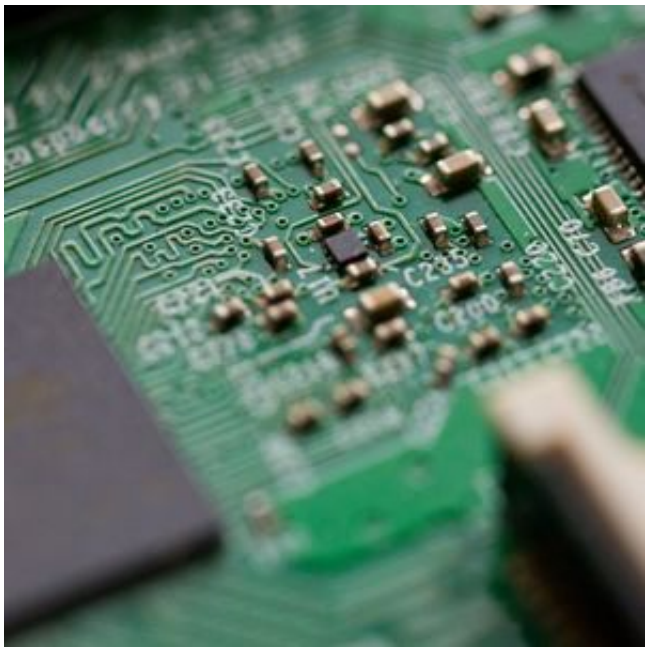
However, ahead of the plenary vote, the negotiations with the Council and the Commission have scaled down Green ambitions, reflected in the committee vote. Some of our demands are included in final texts, such as the clearer definition of novel foods with special cases explicitly mentioned and better transparency requirements. But the European Commission can still decide, by implementing acts, whether or not a particular food falls within the definition of novel food. The outcomes of the negotiations also exclude the moratorium on 'nano foods' and transitional rules for food from cloned animals and their descendants.

This may lead to a very weak result for the vote in plenary, on Wednesday 28 October. But again, when casting their vote, Green MEPs will highlight their demands in specific amendments showing their strong concerns over the use of nanotechnologies in foods. Because the Greens/EFA group will never allow to mess with citizens' health and freedom of choice.

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