Press release | 29.02.2012

Baby food rules

EP votes for stricter labelling of baby foods but MEPs lack bottle to ban most toxic substances

The European Parliament environment committee today voted on EU rules on food for young children and infants and food for special medical purposes. The Greens gave a mixed response to the vote, welcoming improvements on labelling but regretting the failure to ensure the most toxic pesticides cannot be used in the production of baby food. After the vote, Green public health and food safety spokesperson **Carl Schlyter** said:

"MEPs have today voted to improve EU rules on baby foods, strengthening some areas of the original legislative proposal. However, the Greens regret that a majority of MEPs lacked the bottle to push for tougher rules, notably as regards the use of toxic pesticides. The proposal to widen the scope of the legislation to low-calorie foods is also unhelpful, and would be better dealt with under existing EU health claims rules.

"The Greens wanted to ensure that baby food cannot contain ingredients on which the most toxic pesticides have been used in the production process. Regrettably, a majority of MEPs failed to support this measure, which would have provided vital protection to children, who are most vulnerable to exposure to toxic substances.

"The committee's support for stricter labelling rules is a welcome improvement. Strict rules on labelling will now apply to all foods intended for children up to 12 months. Producers will not be allowed to use manipulative images, like smiling babies, to plug their products. Breast milk is the healthiest option for infants and babies, and formula producers should not use glossy marketing to try and convince parents otherwise.

"It is also welcome that the problem of 'children's milk' will finally be tackled. There is a variety of milk-based products for children up to 3 years, which are marketed with terms like 'growth milks', yet which do not have any added-benefit and may even be harmful to children. The Commission should examine the problem and, in the meantime, strict EU health claims rules should apply."

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