Press release | 11.06.2013

Baby food rules

Step forward on misleading labels but opportunity missed on toxic pesticides in baby food

The European Parliament today voted on EU rules on food for young children and infants and food for special medical purposes. The vote marks the adoption of the new rules. The Greens gave a mixed response to the vote, welcoming improvements on labelling but regretting that the final legislation will not include a Green proposal (from the first reading) 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:

"The new rules today are a step forward for preventing misleading packaging of food intended for infants. We need to do our utmost to ensure parents are equipped to choose the best feeding options for their babies and this means preventing the use of idealised images on infant food packages, which can distort the reality. The legislation adopted today will ensure that the packaging of foods intended for children up to 12 months will not be allowed to include manipulative images, like smiling babies. Breast milk is the healthiest option for infants, and milk formula producers should not use glossy marketing to try and convince parents otherwise. Formula should rather be used when needed.

"The rules also address the issue of 'children's milk'. There is a variety of milk-based products for children up to 3 years that are marketed with terms like 'growth milks', yet which do not have any added-benefit and may even be harmful to children. The Commission will now have to examine this problem and make proposals on how it should be dealt with, with strict EU health claims rules applying in the meantime.

"The Greens had wanted to ensure that the baby food production process excludes the most toxic substances, like toxic pesticides. Regrettably, there was no real appetite either in the EP or, particularly, from EU governments for this measure, which would have provided vital protection to children, who are most vulnerable to exposure to toxic substances. However, the EU Commission has promised to review the prospect of a phase-out."

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