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Press release | 19.04.2011

EU food labelling rules

MEPs vote for more detailed food information; failure to support full front-of-pack labelling a blow

The European Parliament environment and public health committee today voted on a legislative proposal on food information rules in second reading. While the Greens welcomed some improvements, such as on origin labelling and fake foods, the group described the failure to support full front-of-pack health labelling as a setback. After the vote, Green MEP and vice-chair of the EP environment and public health committee **Carl Schlyter** said:

"Today's vote would ensure more detailed information on food labels but the failure of MEPs to support full front-of-pack labelling is a setback in terms of providing more straightforward health information to consumers. There is no good justification for 'hiding away' core health information on the back of food packaging beyond the marketing interests of the food industry, and it is highly regrettable that MEPs have sought to put these marketing interests first. A narrow majority of MEPs in the committee failed to support full front-of pack labelling for 4 core nutrients, but we hope that this decision will be overturned when the EP votes in plenary.

"The vote would strengthen the legislative proposal in a number of other areas however. MEPs supported extensive origin labelling notably for animal products (1). This will ensure that consumers now know where their meat or dairy products come from, as well as when foods involve the long distance transportation of animals, so they can choose to avoid buying them.

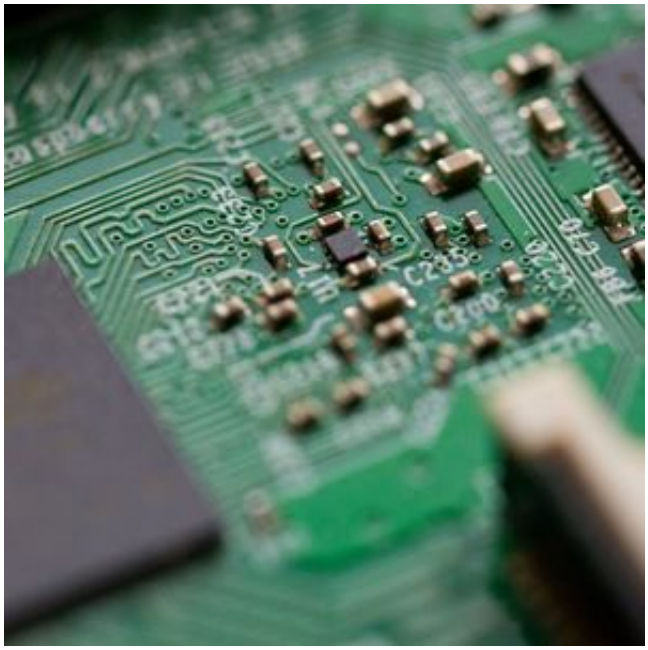
"MEPs also supported stronger rules against fake foods and deceptive practises like adding water or gluing meat, ensuring these must be labelled. Misleading labels, such as picturing fruit or other foods on labels even if they are not present in a food product, would also be banned. The committee also supported a proposal for the mandatory labelling of trans-fats, which is crucial to responding to the health risks associated with this food component."

(1) The committee voted for an extensive origin labelling, including all meat and poultry, milk and dairy products, other single-ingredient products and meat, poultry and fish when used in processed foods. For meat and poultry, if the animals have been born, reared and slaughtered in different places, all of these places must be mentioned. This provision gives consumers the possibility to choose not to support the long-distance transport of animals.

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