Press release | 16.06.2010

Food information

Parliament rejects traffic light labelling for food

The European Parliament today adopted a regulation on food information for consumers. Commenting on the vote, Green MEP **Carl Schlyter**, Vice-President of the Environment committee said:

"The European Parliament today has taken a step forward in the direction of better consumer information, but missed the opportunity for a leap. Despite some shortcomings, the Greens supported the proposal on food information because it brings important improvements for consumers who want to be well informed about what they eat.

We regret strongly that Parliament has given in to intense industry pressure and has rejected the traffic light labelling. The labelling with red, yellow and green colours would have given consumers clear and easily understandable information on unhealthy or healthy contents of the food they want to buy. MEPs voted also to not allow traffic light labelling at a national level, but we are confident that the council will not accept such a limitation of the member states.

But the new legislation will still bring some progress for consumers as producers will have to indicate on the front of the package the content of energy, salt, sugar, fat and saturated fat.

Another success is that for the first time the origin of meat, fish poultry and dairy products will have to be indicated. Consumers will know where the animals have been born, raised and slaughtered. This will help them to give preference to products from their region and help consumers to avoid long animal transports.

We deeply regret that parliament followed industry's lobbying efforts and even enlarged the exemption for alcohol at the request of the EPP, even though alcohol is also a food with a high calorie content, of which most consumers are not aware.

MEPs also voted for smaller but important improvements. Milk, which is treated so that it is drinkable longer than 7 days, cannot be labelled as fresh milk. Trans fats, which are highly unhealthy, will have to be labelled as well as so-called nanofood (food containing nano-particles) as well as appetite enhancing substances. If a food contains sweetener it has to be indicated at the front of he package. All of these decisions are progress to enable the consumers to make an informed choice about what they eat."

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