



Press release

***COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL ON FOOD LABELLING:
A MISSED OPPORTUNITY FOR SIMPLIFICATION?***

Brussels, 30 January 2008: Today the Commission has proposed its long-awaited review of the EU food labelling requirements. The draft Regulation, however, seems to miss its announced objective of simplification of the complex food labelling legislation. EuroCommerce also fears that some of the proposed new rules may threaten the single market.

This text is the result of an almost two-year consultation process leading to a revision of both the General Food Labelling Directive as well as the Nutrition Labelling Directive. This revision was initially welcomed by the commerce sector as an opportunity to achieve a more efficient labelling legislation, focusing on essential information needed by consumers and leaving operators with sufficient flexibility.

Unfortunately, the proposal presented today raises serious concerns. For instance, the requirement for a minimum font size of 3 mm for all mandatory labelling provisions will create considerable costs for food businesses without any benefit for consumers. "3 mm is by far larger than the size used by newspapers. Are they not readable?" wondered Xavier Durieu, Secretary General of EuroCommerce. "This new requirement will also lead to an increase of the size of the packages, which goes against all the efforts made by the various actors and contradicts the Commission initiatives to reduce packaging waste".

Regarding the new rules on nutrition labelling, retailers recall their long-standing engagement in developing nutrition information that can help consumers make healthier food choices. But the proposed scheme goes too far by imposing too many indications on the front of pack, which loses the objective of at-a-glance information. "We regret that the voluntary commitments on labelling made by food retail companies to the EU Nutrition Platform have not been given more time to work before the EU legislates" commented Xavier Durieu. "While the commerce sector is taking on its responsibility, these efforts will be useless if the legislator does not focus more on education".

Finally, the proposed text introduces new opportunities for Member States to adopt national legislation on origin labelling, which is a threat to the single market. Just as is the new "Governance system", permitting Member States to adopt national schemes for the presentation of nutrition information. For EuroCommerce, the development of different rules risks creating potential barriers to the free movement of goods, thus hamper the EU claimed ambition of competitiveness.

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