



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Food labelling: Parliament gives to SMEs with one hand but takes with the other ***SMEs welcome exemption for non pre-packed food; worried about compulsory country of origin indication***

Brussels, 16 June 2010 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, was left with mixed feelings by today's vote at the European Parliament on a new set of rules for food labelling in the EU. On the positive side, the Parliament made it clear that non pre-packed products are excluded from labelling requirements, thereby avoiding extra burdens that would have put many small food producing and processing enterprises out of business. On the negative side, however, the Parliament introduced compulsory country of origin labelling for virtually all foodstuffs. Such indications are often unworkable for SMEs and should be left to the appreciation of food business operators, stressed UEAPME, calling on the European Council to reject this clause.

Food Policy Advisor **Ludger Fischer**, who coordinates the UEAPME Food Forum, offered the following comments:

"Small food producers vary their offer every day, according to season and availability. Their production is not standardised, and some of them may never make the same exact product twice. Labelling and applying a fully fledged nutritional notice on each of their products is either impossible or too expensive. In both cases, it would push the business out of the market and dramatically reduce the choices available to consumers. Thankfully, the Parliament has understood the possible consequences of extending labelling requirements to non pre-packed food and has voted to avoid this scenario."

"Compulsory country of origin labelling, on the other hand, is a most unwelcome addition which the Parliament should have steered well clear of. The existing rules state that the country of origin must be indicated only when its absence is likely to mislead consumers, leaving the choice to the food producer in all other cases. This is more than sufficient to guarantee consumer protection while respecting the needs of businesses operating in the sector. Unfortunately, the Parliament made country of origin labelling compulsory for all food, including food coming from other EU countries. This is a slap in our face and will trigger enormous complications for small businesses changing ingredients very frequently. The Council should reject this clause if it is serious about protecting the distinctiveness of typical European fresh foodstuffs."

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 85 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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