



## ***“The voice of SMEs in Europe”***

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Simplified food labelling rules would serve consumers and producers alike**

- **“Hands off non pre-packaged food”, warn UEAPME experts**
- **Labelling must be clearer to be truly beneficial**

**Brussels, 16 June 2006.** The European Commission’s plans to revise most of the existing food labelling rules show the inadequacies and inconsistencies of the current system, according to UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation. Responding to a consultation launched by the European Commission on “Labelling: competitiveness, consumer information and better regulation for the EU”, UEAPME welcomed the Commission’s approach and submitted a number of suggestions to reach the simplification target<sup>1</sup>.

Experts from the UEAPME Working Group on Foodstuffs, representing the majority of food producing enterprises in Europe, suggested that the new labelling regime should at least satisfy four key principles:

- Rules governing labelling of non pre-packaged food should be left within the remit of individual Member States. EU-wide legislation does not seem appropriate in this respect, as the quantity and quality of non pre-packaged food produced vary significantly across Member States.
- Consumer education campaigns should be implemented alongside actions on labelling and other forms of product-related information. Several studies show that current labels are not sufficiently understood – useful information would still be meaningless to non-educated consumers.
- Mandatory elements in labels should be kept to a minimum in order to be truly relevant and understandable, while at the same time ensuring consumer safety. All other elements should be voluntary, unless governed either by specific legislation or by self-regulation.
- The costs of introducing labelling changes will generally be higher for SME food producers, as they tend produce small quantities of varying foodstuffs. The revised labelling rules should take this aspect into account.

“Both consumers and producers are not satisfied with the current labelling schemes, which are not fulfilling their potential”, said **Ludger Fischer**, UEAPME Adviser on Food issues and Co-ordinator of the UEAPME Working Group on Foodstuffs. “We trust that the Commission will find our comments useful during the revision process, in order to achieve a workable labelling system in the light of better regulation”, he concluded.

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**EDITORS’ NOTE:** UEAPME is the employer’s organisation representing crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 78 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across Europe, covering over 11 million enterprises with 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ueapme.com/docs/pos\\_papers/2006/060615\\_UEAPME\\_pp\\_labelling\\_final.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/docs/pos_papers/2006/060615_UEAPME_pp_labelling_final.pdf)