



30.11.2018

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0369/2018 by Marco Bava (Italian) on a ban on added sugar in food products

1. Summary of petition

In this short petition, the petitioner expresses concern over the increasing amount of sugar added to food products and its harmful effects on the health of both children and adults; he therefore calls for a ban on the addition of sugar and other sweeteners to food products.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 29 August 2018. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 30 November 2018

The Commission's observations

In accordance with EU food labelling rules, it is mandatory for food producers to list all food ingredients on the label, including different sugars as well as sweeteners. Also, a nutrition declaration with the total sugars content has become mandatory on the majority of pre-packed foods since 13 December 2016. This mandatory nutrition declaration, together with the list of ingredients, ensures that consumers have access to clear information on the presence of both sugars and other sweeteners, and the total sugars content, thereby enabling them to make well-informed dietary choices.

Member States are responsible for the definition of their public health policy, including in relation to nutrition. The Commission is supporting national efforts, in particular through activities which include initiatives to reduce sugar intakes in general, to bring them closer to recommended levels.

The 2007 Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health Issues promotes a balanced diet and active lifestyle, and is implemented through Commission activities as well as cooperation among Member States in the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity, and through voluntary initiatives taken by multi-sectoral stakeholders in the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

In February 2011, the High Level Group agreed on a framework for voluntary initiatives on selected nutrients, which includes, among others, added sugars. In 2015, it validated an Added Sugars Annex to this framework, promoting a voluntary reduction of 10% in added sugars in processed food by 2020.

Also, in the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, the Commission is following commitments by industry on food reformulation, aiming to decrease the intake of, among others, sugars in order to bring population intake levels closer to recommended levels, and to make healthier choices available.

As for sweeteners, only those included in the Union list of authorised additives may be placed on the market as such and used in foods under the conditions of use specified therein. There are strict general and specific conditions for inclusion and use of sweeteners in the Union list. The strict conditions in place ensure that the use of sweeteners is safe, technologically justified, and has benefits and advantages for the consumer.

Conclusion

The current EU rules ensure that consumers are provided with relevant information enabling them to make informed dietary choices. The Commission will continue to support national initiatives to improve the health of citizens, which may include initiatives to reduce excessive consumption of sugars. The Commission considers that the means in place as described above sufficiently enable consumers to make informed dietary choices. While the Commission does not intend to ban the addition of sugars or sweeteners in foods, it is ready to support Member States in the future to implement best practice to tackle chronic diseases and their underlying risk factors such as unhealthy diets, if Member States identify such initiatives as a priority.