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TEXTS ADOPTED

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**P8\_TA(2016)0225**

**Mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods**

**European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2016 on mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods (2016/2583(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers, amending Regulations (EC) No 1924/2006 and (EC) No 1925/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Commission Directive 87/250/EEC, Council Directive 90/496/EEC, Commission Directive 1999/10/EC, Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, Commission Directives 2002/67/EC and 2008/5/EC and Commission Regulation (EC) No 608/2004<sup>1</sup> (the ‘Food Information to Consumers Regulation’), and in particular Article 26(5) and (7) thereof,
- having regard to the reports of 20 May 2015 from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for milk, milk used as an ingredient in dairy products and types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry meat (COM(2015)0205) and regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 50 % of a food (COM(2015)0204),
- having regard to the report of 17 December 2013 from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for meat used as an ingredient (COM(2013)0755), and the accompanying Commission Staff Working document of 17 December 2013 on origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient: consumers’ attitudes, feasibility of possible scenarios and impacts (SWD(2013)0437),
- having regard to its resolution of 11 February 2015 on country of origin labelling for meat in processed food<sup>2</sup>, and the formal response of the Commission adopted on 6 May 2015,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 304, 22.11.2011, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0034.

- having regard to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1337/2013 of 13 December 2013 laying down rules for the application of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for fresh, chilled and frozen meat of swine, sheep, goats and poultry<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 6 February 2014<sup>2</sup> on the above mentioned Commission implementing Regulation (EU) No 1337/2013 of 13 December 2013,
  - having regard to its resolution of 14 January 2014 on the food crisis, fraud in the food chain and the control thereof<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the question to the Commission on mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods (O-000031/2016 – B8-0363/2016),
  - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,
  - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Article 26(5) of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation requires the Commission to submit reports to the European Parliament and Council by 13 December 2014 regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry meat, milk, milk used as an ingredient in dairy products, unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 50 % of a food;
- B. whereas Article 26(8) of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation requires the Commission to adopt implementing acts concerning the application of paragraph 3 of that Article by 13 December 2013;
- C. whereas origin labelling rules are already in place and operate effectively for many other food products including unprocessed meat, eggs, fruit and vegetables, fish, honey, extra virgin olive oil, virgin olive oil, wine and spirit drinks;
- D. whereas Article 26(7) of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation provides that the reports must, inter alia, take into account the need for the consumer to be informed, the feasibility of providing the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance and an analysis of the costs and benefits of the introduction of such measures; whereas it provides further that the reports may be accompanied by proposals to modify relevant provisions of EU legislation;
- E. whereas Article 26(2) of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation stresses that the indication of the country of origin or the place of provenance shall be mandatory where failure to indicate this might mislead the consumer as to the true country of origin or place of provenance of the food, in particular if the information accompanying the food or the label as a whole would otherwise imply that the food has a different country of origin or place of provenance;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 335, 14.12.2013, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2014)0096.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2014)0011.

- F. whereas on 20 May 2015 the Commission published its report on the mandatory indication of the country of origin for milk, milk used as an ingredient in dairy products and types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry meat ('report on milk and other meat') and its report on the mandatory indication of the country of origin for unprocessed foods, single ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 50 % of a food;
- G. whereas, according to Commission report COM(2013)0755, the more complex the cutting and processing stages within the meat sector and the more advanced the level of processing, the more complex traceability becomes for the purpose of origin labelling;
- H. whereas the food supply chain is often long and complex, involving many food business operators and other parties; whereas consumers are increasingly unaware of how their food is produced and individual food business operators do not always have an overview of the entire product chain;
- I. whereas consumers' overall willingness to pay (WTP) for origin information appears to be modest although consumer surveys<sup>1</sup> on WTP indicate that consumers are largely willing to pay more for origin information;
- J. whereas, in its resolution of 11 February 2015, Parliament urged the Commission to follow up its report of 17 December 2013 with legislative proposals making the indication of the origin of meat in processed foods mandatory in order to ensure greater transparency throughout the food chain and to better inform European consumers, while taking into account its impact assessments and avoiding excessive costs and administrative burdens; whereas the Commission has yet to make any follow-up legislative proposals;
- K. whereas strict specifications exist only for voluntary quality schemes, such as protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), or traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) schemes, while the criteria used in voluntary labelling schemes for foodstuffs covered by Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 may vary considerably;

### ***Drinking milk and milk used as an ingredient in dairy products***

1. Points out that Recital 32 of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation states that milk is one of the products for which an indication of origin is considered of particular interest;
2. Emphasises that, according to the Eurobarometer survey 2013, 84 % of EU citizens consider it necessary to indicate the origin of milk, whether sold as such or used as an ingredient in dairy products; notes that this is one of several factors that may influence consumer behaviour;
3. Points out that the mandatory indication of the origin of milk, sold as such or used as an ingredient in dairy products, is a useful measure to protect the quality of dairy products and protect employment in a sector which is going through a severe crisis;
4. Notes that, according to the survey accompanying the Commission's report on milk and other meat, the costs of mandatory origin labelling for milk and milk used as an ingredient increase as the complexity of the production process grows; notes that the same survey

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/docs/labelling\\_legislation\\_final\\_report\\_ew\\_02\\_15\\_284\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/docs/labelling_legislation_final_report_ew_02_15_284_en.pdf), p. 50.

suggests that businesses in certain Member States had overstated the impact of mandatory origin labelling on their competitive position, as the survey could find no clear explanation for the high cost estimates given by such businesses, but stated that it may be a signal of strong opposition per se to origin labelling;

5. Calls for the establishment of a Commission Working Group to further evaluate the Commission's report, published on 20 May 2015, in order to determine which costs can be reduced to an acceptable level if further mandatory country of origin labelling proposals are limited to dairy and lightly processed dairy products;
6. Appreciates the survey's analysis of the costs and benefits of the introduction of mandatory origin labelling for milk and milk used as an ingredient, but considers that the Commission in its conclusions does not sufficiently take into account the positive aspects of country of origin labelling for such products, such as greater consumer information; notes that consumers can feel misled when information on mandatory origin labelling is not available and other food labels, such as national flags, are used;
7. Stresses the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in the processing chain;
8. Takes the view that the Commission should take into account and analyse the economic impact of compulsory origin labelling on SMEs in the agricultural and food sectors concerned;
9. Considers that the Commission's conclusion in relation to milk and milk used as an ingredient possibly overstates the costs of country of origin labelling to business as all dairy products are considered together;
10. Notes that the Commission concludes that the costs of country of origin labelling for milk would be modest;

#### ***Other types of meat***

11. Stresses that, according to the Eurobarometer survey 2013, 88 % of EU citizens consider it necessary to indicate the origin of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goat and poultry meat;
12. Notes that the horsemeat scandal showed the need for greater transparency in the horsemeat supply chain;
13. Notes that the Commission's report found that the operating costs of mandatory country of origin labelling for the meats under its remit would be relatively minor;

#### ***Processed meat***

14. Highlights that the Commission's report of 17 December 2013 regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for meat used as an ingredient recognises that more than 90 % of consumer respondents consider it important that meat origin be labelled on processed food products;
15. Considers that consumers, like many professionals, are in favour of the mandatory labelling of meat in processed products and that such a measure would make it possible to maintain consumer confidence in food products by introducing greater transparency into the supply chain;

16. Emphasises that it is in the interest of the European consumer to have mandatory origin labelling on all food products;
17. Points out that labelling in itself does not provide a safeguard against fraud, and highlights the need for a cost efficient control system in order to ensure consumer trust;
18. Recalls that voluntary labelling schemes, where appropriately implemented in various Member States, have been successful for both consumer information and for producers;
19. Is of the view that the failure to adopt implementing acts pursuant to Article 26(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 means that the Article cannot be properly enforced;
20. Notes that protected designations of origin already exist for many processed meat and dairy products (e.g. ham and cheese), according to which the origin of the meat used is laid down in the production criteria and increased traceability applies; calls, therefore, on the Commission to promote the development of products with 'protected designation of origin' (PDO), 'protected geographical indication' (PGI), or 'traditional speciality guaranteed' (TSG) pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012<sup>1</sup> and thereby to ensure that consumers have access to high-quality products of safe provenance;
21. Calls on the Commission to ensure that any current EU country-of-origin labelling regulations are not weakened in any ongoing trade negotiations such as TTIP, and that the right to propose further additional country-of-origin labelling regulations in the future for other food products is not impeded;

### ***Conclusions***

22. Calls on the Commission to implement the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance for all kinds of drinking milk, dairy products and meat products, and to consider extending the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance to other single-ingredient foods or those with one main ingredient, by making legislative proposals in these areas;
23. Urges the Commission to submit legislative proposals making the indication of the origin of meat in processed foods mandatory in order to ensure greater transparency throughout the food chain and to better inform European consumers in the wake of the horsemeat scandal and other cases of food fraud; points out in, addition, that mandatory labelling requirements should take into account the principle of proportionality and the administrative burden for food business operators and enforcement authorities;
24. Considers that the aim of mandatory food origin labelling is to restore consumer confidence in food products; calls on the Commission to make a proposal to this end while taking into account the transparency of the information and its legibility for consumers, the economic viability of European businesses and the purchasing power of consumers;
25. Highlights the importance of a level playing field on the internal market and implores the Commission to take this into account when discussing rules regarding mandatory origin labelling;
26. Calls on the Commission to support labelling schemes relating to animal welfare during cultivation, transport and slaughter;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 343, 14.12.2012, p. 1.

27. Deplores the fact that the Commission has still not made any move to include eggs and egg products in the list of foods for which indication of the country of origin or place of provenance is mandatory, even though cheap egg products made from liquid or dried eggs which are primarily used in processed foods are being imported into the EU market from third countries and are clearly circumventing the EU ban on cage rearing; takes the view, therefore, that in this context the mandatory labelling of egg products and foods containing eggs to indicate origin and rearing method could improve transparency and protection, and calls on the Commission to submit a market analysis and, if necessary, to draw up appropriate legislative proposals;
28. Believes that country of origin labelling for drinking milk, lightly processed dairy products (such as cheese and cream) and lightly processed meat products (such as bacon and sausages) would have significantly reduced associated costs, and that this labelling should be explored as a priority;
29. Considers that origin labelling as such does not prevent fraud; advocates, in this connection, that a resolute course should be taken to step up monitoring, improve enforcement of existing legislation and impose more stringent penalties;
30. Calls on the Commission to take the necessary action to combat fraud in relation to rules on the voluntary labelling of origin for foodstuffs;
31. Invites the Commission to support the existing quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs covered by Regulation (EU) No 1151/2012, and asks for European promotion campaigns on those products to be stepped up;
32. Reiterates its call on the Commission to fulfil its legal obligation to adopt, by 13 December 2013, the implementing acts necessary for the proper enforcement of Article 26(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011, so that the national authorities can impose the relevant penalties;

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33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.