Question for written answer E-004201/2017
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Use of the term 'probiotic' and nutrition claims

In many Member States, the term ‘probiotic’ is widely understood as indicating a category of products. This is particularly true of Italy, one of the largest markets in Europe.

Since the entry into force of Regulation (EC) 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods, however, products claiming to be probiotics or to have specific health effects cannot be sold in the EU, as use of the term ‘probiotic’ is considered to be an unauthorised health claim. According to the Commission, the term implies that a product provides a health benefit, which could be misleading to consumers unless it can be scientifically substantiated.

In spite of many applications having been submitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), there are no approved health claims for probiotics. As a result, consumers are faced with labelling employing the Latin term for a particular strain of bacteria, which is not easily understood and creates confusion rather than clarity.

Given that probiotics are used in food supplements, which contain micronutrients, and that the term ‘probiotic’ should not be used in high-calorie products:

– Could the Commission clarify whether it will consider authorising the use of this term as a nutrition claim with specific conditions of use, to prevent it from being applied to unhealthy products with a high calorie content?