Food safety: Enhancing consumer trust in EU risk assessment and authorisation

- EP and Council negotiators struck a deal to increase transparency of food risk assessment
- A common European database of commissioned studies to be set up
- This is a follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative on glyphosate

Draft rules to ensure the EU risk assessment procedure for food safety is more transparent and independent were informally agreed with the Romanian Presidency.

The new rules, agreed on Monday night, aim to improve transparency in risk assessment and ensure that studies submitted by the industry to support applications and used by European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in its risk assessment are more reliable, objective and independent.

A new pre-submission advisory procedure has been introduced, where EFSA may advise the applicant on how to provide all required information.

A common European Database of commissioned studies will be set up, to deter companies that are applying for authorisation from holding back unfavourable studies. Once the studies submitted to EFSA are made public, the agency could also consult third parties to identify whether other relevant scientific data or studies exist.

Negotiators also agreed on a set of criteria to decide what kind of information can be kept confidential, e.g. the manufacturing or the production process, except for information relevant for assessing safety.

Quote

“This legislative file will strengthen consumers’ trust in the food sector’s risk assessment and authorisation process. It strikes a good and effective balance between transparency, on the one hand, and, on the other, protecting European business, including SMEs”, said rapporteur Pilar Ayuso (EPP, ES).
Background

The proposal is a follow-up to the European Citizens’ Initiative on glyphosate, especially to concerns expressed in the initiative regarding the transparency of the scientific studies used to evaluate pesticides. It also follows a fitness check of the General Food Law, launched in 2014 and completed in January 2018 by the Commission.

Next steps

The informal agreement will now have to be endorsed by Parliament and Council of Ministers. The Environment Committee will hold a vote on 20 February 2019.

Further information

Procedure
EP Research briefing: Authorisation of pesticides in the EU (February 2018)
General food law: transparency and sustainability of EU risk assessment in the food chain (European Commission)
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