

## FAQ on kebab meat

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# Background

### **What exactly is the European Parliament voting on?**

Parliament will be voting on Wednesday on a European Commission proposal to allow phosphate additives in “frozen vertical meat spits”, a description of products being sold in many kebab street shops throughout Europe.

### **What is the procedure?**

The European Commission proposal already received the support of a majority of Member States. However, it had to go through a 3-month scrutiny period, during which the European Parliament may object to the text and veto it. To do so, the House has to have an absolute majority of its members with at least 376 votes behind the resolution drafted by the Public Health and Food Safety Committee.

### **Could the outcome result in a ban on kebab meat?**

No. Parliament is not voting on a proposal to ban anything, but on whether or not to allow a certain type of food additive to be used.

### **What does the existing legislation say on phosphate additives?**

Under regulation 1333/2008, phosphate additives are banned from meat preparations, unless stated otherwise in an EU list, which is regularly updated. Under the current situation, the use of phosphate additives is authorised in a small number of products, such as certain breakfast sausages and burgers. But they are not allowed to be used in the production of frozen kebab meat.

### **Why does the European Commission want to allow phosphate additives in kebab meat?**

The European Commission considers that there is a “technological need” for the use of phosphates to bind pieces of meat together and allow them to thaw and cook homogeneously on a spit. It also considers that this proposal would not affect consumer health.

### **Why did the Public Health and Food Safety Committee recommend not authorising the use of those additives?**

As there have been reports of the risk of cardiovascular disease in connection with phosphate additives and the European Food Safety Authority is currently conducting a study into the risks of phosphate additives, Public Health and Food Safety Committee MEPs think it is better to wait for the outcome of this study. They also highlight that, as phosphate additives may cause meat to retain water, this can result in meat weighing artificially more and being sold at a higher price.

### **What happens if Parliament adopts the objection by the Public Health and Food Safety Committee?**

The European Commission proposal would fall. This would mean a regulatory status quo, where the use of phosphate additives would continue to be unauthorised in kebab meat. It would mean business as usual for the sector, and for consumers. The Commission would have to table a new proposal.

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## And what happens if the objection is not adopted?

Parliament would then give the green light to the European Commission to authorise the use of the additives for kebab meat. Like for any other additive allowed on the EU single market, if a health concern were to arise, for example due to the outcome of the study being undertaken by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the authorisation would have to be reconsidered, as stated in legislation.

## Contacts

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