

Unofficial version

DRAFT REPORT plus amendments as voted on 5 November 2002

on the Commission communication on foods and food ingredients authorised for treatment with ionising radiation in the Community
(COM(2001) 472 – C5-2002/0010 – 2002/2008(COS))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy

Rapporteur: Hiltrud Breyer

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on the Commission communication on foods and food ingredients authorised for treatment with ionising radiation in the Community (COM(2001) 472 – C5-2002/0010 – 2002/2008(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication (COM(2001) 472 – C5-2002/0010¹),
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy (A5-..../2002),
- A. whereas the Commission is consulting the European Parliament on completing the Community list of foodstuffs authorised for irradiation within the European Union; whereas the final list should reconfirm that protection of consumer health and the environment must take precedence over all other considerations,
- B. whereas Article 174(1) of the EC Treaty says that Community policy shall contribute to preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment and protecting human health and that this policy shall be based on the precautionary principle,
- C. whereas framework Directive 1999/2/EC concerning foods and food ingredients treated with ionising radiation requires that a food item may be irradiated only if there is a technological need, the treatment poses no health hazard, it is of benefit to consumers and is not used as a substitute for good hygiene, health and agricultural practice; whereas any food irradiated or containing irradiated ingredients must be labelled and irradiated foods from third countries must be accompanied by detailed documentation and must have been treated only at Community-approved facilities,
- D. whereas the World Health Organisation has stated that irradiation does not pose a danger to health, if used properly, (votes: 23 in favour, 20 against)**
- E. whereas hospitals in some Member States use irradiated food for some patients' diet, to remove potentially dangerous bacteria,**
- F. whereas only Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK allow irradiation of foods other than herbs, spices and vegetable seasonings² and, in practice, few foods are irradiated ~~even~~ in these countries, ~~demonstrating little technological need,~~

¹ OJ C ...

² For a full list of the food categories permitted in these Member States, go to the document below on the Europa website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sfp/fi12_43-18_en.pdf.

- G. whereas **some** consumer bodies doubt the technological need and benefit to consumers and predict misuse of the technology to substitute for good hygiene; whereas **some** food producers and traders of meat products, dried fruit/vegetables, potatoes, milk products, cereal flakes and tea are not in favour of including their products on the list, ~~demonstrating little technological need~~, (votes: 23 in favour, 19 against)
- H. ~~whereas the irradiation industry, which calls for inclusion in the Community list of all foods which received a favourable opinion from the Scientific Committee on Food, will gain financially from greater use of irradiation,~~ (23 in favour of deletion, 20 against)
- I. whereas sale of illegally irradiated, unlabelled foods ~~already~~ occurs within the EU, ~~for example, in the UK³~~; and is a potential health hazard; whereas breaches of labelling laws mislead consumers, **demonstrating the need for greater monitoring and enforcement**,
- J. whereas irradiation depletes some nutrients and produces radiolytic products in some foods, some of which may pose health risks; whereas data on long-term health effects of eating a diet based largely on irradiated foods are lacking and ~~the precautionary principle should be applied until such data are available~~ **research into the potential health risks should be conducted as soon as possible**,
- K. whereas irradiation supports longer-distance transportation of foods; ~~encouraging an unsustainable food supply trend~~; **there is a risk this will encourage an unsustainable food supply trend, however this should be balanced against potential benefits for food producers in the developing world**;
- L. **whereas irradiation can contribute to hiding low hygiene standards in certain fields of food production, such as shrimp and prawn aquaculture and processing**;
- M. whereas irradiating with radioactive (gamma) sources poses safety risks to workers, health and environment through accidental exposure and leaks, ~~and risks to security through acquisition of radioactive materials by terrorists seeking to make 'dirty bombs'~~; ~~whereas improved safety and security measures at gamma irradiation plants may raise costs leading to higher prices for irradiated foods~~,
1. **Calls on the Commission to collaborate with the World Health Organisation in commissioning and disseminating research into the safety of irradiated foods for consumers and food and retail staff**;
 2. Welcomes the Commission's consideration of consumer and food industry opinions in finalising the Community list and the emphasis on consumer benefits, genuine technological need and avoidance of treatments which can be misused to substitute for good practice;
 3. ~~Welcomes~~ **Notes** the Commission's suggestion that the current list **could** be regarded as complete and ~~requests that this be accepted so only~~ **believes that any additions to herbs**,

³ The UK Food Standards Agency reported in June that dietary supplements, seafoods and a spice product were illegally irradiated. See http://www.foodstandards.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/irradiated_food_pr

spices and vegetable seasonings ~~are~~ **only be** permitted for irradiation in the EU **as and when scientific knowledge suggests it is safe and efficacious to do so;**

4. **Notes with interest the second option envisaged by the Commission in its communication, namely that the products which are irradiated in some Member States in substantial amounts should be included on the positive list, provided this technology can improve the safety of certain products;**
5. **Insists that before any proposal is submitted to add foodstuffs to the positive list (pursuant to Directive 1999/2/EC) a detailed analysis must be carried out on each foodstuff, with evidence given to demonstrate that each of the conditions for authorising food irradiation in Annex I of Directive 1999/2/EC are clearly met;**
6. **Calls on the Commission to investigate the health and safety implications for workers involved in irradiating food;**
7. Requests the Commission to ~~provide more resources immediately to accelerate~~ **encourage** the development and validation of ~~safer~~ **safe and effective** substitutes for chemical fumigation and methyl bromide ~~than food irradiation~~ for food disinfection;
8. Calls on the Commission to require ~~annual testing programmes~~ **random testing of food** by all Member States to prevent illegally irradiated, unlabelled products from being sold and to require all results to be made publicly available with tough action against breaches of the law;
9. **Insists on the immediate removal of all products falsely labelled 'Not Irradiated' when this claim has been disproved by the appropriate tests;**
10. **Calls on the Commission to enforce regular controls, including irradiation detection surveys, of potentially irradiated imported foodstuffs and food products in all Member States, especially of foods imported from third countries that are known to make a wide use of food irradiation, for example, the US and Brazil;**
11. Asks that a mechanism of sanctions be introduced into the Directives against food importers or manufacturers who fail to carry out adequate monitoring to ensure they are not supplied with illegal irradiated ingredients or products and against producers and importers who withhold relevant information;
12. Insists that research into the long-term health effects of eating a diet largely comprised of irradiated foods be conducted ~~and peer reviewed before any additional foods are considered for inclusion in the Community list~~ and that no additional foods shall be added to the list if any evidence of long-term health risks emerges;
13. Stresses that the short- and long-term effects of eating a diet largely comprised of irradiated foods on children's health should be used as a reference for human health risk assessments, given the enhanced sensitivity of children to chemical exposure and depletion of nutrients in food;

14. Stresses that the substitution principle should apply: dangerous processes should be substituted with safer processes; this should be a duty for food producers and processors in order to avoid risks to workers, human health and the environment;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.