



EC Register for Interest Representatives No 109356110578-03

EVU Press Release
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2018 Commission Work Programme – Vegetarian labelling set on track

Europe-wide criteria for definitions of the terms “vegan” and “vegetarian” for food labelling will become law in 2020. This is the very tangible outcome that is now in sight after the European Commission published its work programme for the upcoming year. European consumers of vegan and vegetarian foods as well as their suppliers in production and retail will be able to rely on one set of rules for plant-based food. This will improve the positions of all parties involved in the food chain. The commitment of the EU-Executive is now on record and paves the way for a crucial piece of ‘vegetarian law’.

Ever since the EU had decided to update its rules on food information with a proposal tabled in 2008, the EVU has worked hard towards harmonised rules of veggie-labelling. Fruit of this work is Article 36(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers that obliges the Commission to adopt an implementing act on “information related to suitability of a food for vegetarians or vegans”. However, in the six years since the adoption of the Regulation the Commission put off repeated claims from Member States, Members of the European Parliament, the food industry and the EVU for a start of negotiations on the implementing act, quoting other priorities, the lack of a target date set in the law for establishing the criteria and offering other excuses. This reluctance stood in square contrast to the wishes of virtually all players concerned and led the EVU to work with the food industry’s association FoodDrinkEurope to elaborate a suitable draft.

Eventually, the so-called REFIT-Platform, a forum providing advice to the Commission on the “regulatory fitness check” of European law, based on a submission by the EVU, lent its support which could no longer be ignored. There are no excuses anymore not to start a project that finds unanimous support among stakeholders and helps to foster the internal market in food. While it is still a disappointment that works will not start in 2018, it is now a clearly stated objective that 2019 will see a Commission draft, deliberations in the Standing Committee and the adoption of the implementing act that will become an important symbol for recognition of vegetarian interests by the law.

The EVU will keenly watch over it, so that Brexit, elections to the European Parliament and the appointment of a new College of Commissioners, all of which will be happening in 2019, will pose no distraction for the cause.

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Background

European Commission press release IP/17/4002 of 24 October 2017 “Commission Work Programme 2018: An agenda for a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe”; http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-4002_en.htm

European Commission “Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme – REFIT Scoreboard Summary” of 24 October 2017; https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/regulatory-fitness-and-performance-programme-refit-scoreboard-summary_en_3.pdf

The relevant statement reads:

“In the field of health and food safety, the [REFIT] Platform adopted three opinions: Pesticides residues and on traditional herbal medicines – the opinions will be followed up through the ongoing evaluations on the pesticides legislative framework and on the health claims regulation; *Labelling of Vegan and Vegetarian food – the opinion will feed into an implementing act for which preparatory work will start in 2019.*”

About the EVU

The European Vegetarian Union (www.euroveg.eu) is the voice of the growing number of Europeans choosing vegetarian and vegan products over animal-based nutrition. Its aim is to make vegetarian and meat-reduced lifestyles safe for consumers, producers and retailers and provide adequate information on related health issues, as well as on plant health, animal health and welfare and environmental protection, with reference to a vegetarian lifestyle. The EVU is also the organisation backing the ‘V-Label’ (www.v-label.eu), a voluntary certified labelling scheme.

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