

14 October 2011

Dear All,

PROPOSAL TO REMOVE THE EXISTING NOTIFICATION AND APPROVAL PROCEDURE FOR VOLUNTARY BEEF LABELLING BY AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL REGULATION 1760/2000

1. We are writing to let you know that the European Commission has recently tabled a proposal to remove the existing notification requirement and approval procedure for voluntary beef labelling by amending Council Regulation 1760/2000. The proposal, Document ([COM \(2011\) 525 final](#)), has been published on the Commission website. The proposed deletion of the existing voluntary labelling provisions is contained in Article 1 (14) of the proposal. The Commission's full impact assessment and the executive summary of the impact assessment can also be found in the same place on the Commission website. If you wish to obtain a copy of these documents, please contact Beef.Mailbox@defra.gsi.gov.uk.
2. We are seeking views from stakeholders across the industry about this proposal. Similar exercises are being undertaken in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Background

3. Regulation 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 July 2000 as amended is directly applicable in all Member States and covers labelling indications on origin, production methods and characteristics. There are strict compulsory EU rules on origin labelling of beef which apply throughout the supply chain and support effective traceability back to the point of origin. These rules are intended to provide consumers and beef meat purchasers with clear and reliable information about fresh, chilled and frozen beef (including veal). They are not affected by the Commission's proposal.
4. Currently, Regulation 1760/2000 also provides for operators to include voluntary claims, which cover non-compulsory indications. In England, these must be approved by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). All voluntary claims must undergo

verification by an independent third party and inspection costs must be borne by the operators.

5. Details of the current EU requirements in relation to both the compulsory and voluntary labelling of beef can be found on the [RPA website](#). The Agency has lead responsibility for enforcing these rules in England.

Details of Proposal

6. Under the Commission's proposal, the voluntary labelling provisions would be removed but the existing compulsory beef labelling provisions in Council Regulation 1760/2000 would remain in force.
7. The Commission argues that the costs involved in applying the current voluntary beef labelling rules, coupled with inconsistency of approach across Member States, outweigh the benefits. Hence it concludes that it is appropriate to take a proportionate approach and respond to the Stoiber Group's recommendations that voluntary beef labelling be abolished and beef treated in the same way as other meat under horizontal legislation. In addition, in England, the independent industry-led Task Force on Farming Regulation (May 2011) identified the requirements for verification of voluntary label claims as disproportionate and recommended their removal.
8. Under the Commission's proposal the existing notification and approval procedure for voluntary beef labelling claims would be removed, reducing the administrative burden for operators, and importers from and processors in third countries. This would be achieved by deleting the following Articles in Regulation 1760/2000: Article 16 (General rules), Article 17 (Voluntary labelling system for beef from third countries) and Article 18 (sanctions). The Commission's Impact Assessment which accompanies the proposal indicates that existing voluntary beef labels approved under Regulation 1760/2000 could remain in place. The full Impact Assessment can be found [here](#) (document SEC (2011) 1008) and an Executive Summary is available [here](#) (document SEC (2011) 1009). Defra is seeking clarification from the Commission on how beef labelling will fit with the more general EU provisions on food information.
9. We understand that the Commission expects the revisions to Regulation 1760/2000 to be implemented in 2012, but there is no more precise information at this stage.
10. We realise this proposal may have both costs and benefits for different parts of the supply chain and would welcome your views. Please send any comments on the proposal you may have to the Livestock Team in Defra:

- Beef.Mailbox@defra.gsi.gov.uk or
- Martin Emslie, Defra, Red Meat, Poultry and Eggs Team, Area 5C, 9 Millbank, c/o Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR.

11. The deadline for responses is 21 October to allow us to prepare for a further discussion on the proposal in Brussels on 25 October.

Consultation Criteria

12. This consultation is in line with the Code of practice on Consultations. This can be found at <http://www.berr.gov.uk/bre/>

13. When this consultation ends, we intend to put a copy of the responses in the Defra library at Ergon House, London. This is so that the public can see them. Also, members of the public may ask for a copy of responses under freedom of information legislation.

14. If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note, if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, that won't count as a confidentiality request.

15. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for this information under freedom of information legislation. But, because of the law, we cannot promise that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

16. We will summarise all responses and place this summary on our website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/default.asp> . This summary will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not people's personal names, addresses or other contact details.

17. To see consultation responses and summaries, please contact the library at:

Defra
Information Resource Centre
Lower Ground Floor
Ergon House
17 Smith Square
London

SW1P 3JR

Telephone: 020 7238 6575

Email: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Please give the library 24 hours' notice. There is a charge for photocopying and postage.

12. If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to Defra's Consultation Co-ordinator, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, or email consultation.coordinator@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

13. Thank you for your help in this matter. If you have any queries please contact us as above.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Emslie
Red Meat, Poultry and Eggs Team
Food & Farming Group
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs