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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: "Hybrid" Nutrition Labelling System recommended in some Member States
– *Information from the delegations of Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain*

Delegations will find in the Annex a note submitted by the delegations of Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain to be presented under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 14 March 2016.

**“HYBRID” NUTRITION LABELLING SYSTEM
RECOMMENDED IN SOME MEMBER STATES**

**Information from the delegations of Italy, Cyprus, Greece,
Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain**

Article 35 of Regulation (UE) No 1169/2011 provides that any additional labelling for foodstuff has to be objective, non-discriminatory and must not create obstacles to the free movement of goods.

Any supplementary form of expression of the nutritional content of the food should be based on sound and scientific researches and should not mislead the consumers. It should indeed aim to facilitate consumers in understanding the contribution and importance of the food product to the energy and nutrient content of a diet.

In this framework, the “traffic light” system for food labelling, which is aimed at classifying food as more or less “healthy” mainly by assigning a specific colour based on the content of certain ingredients, does not respect the above provisions.

At the same time, we think it is an ineffective tool for the promotion of a “healthy lifestyle”, which should be focused instead on a balanced diet rather than on the content level of a single ingredient in the food.

Many EU “quality products” (i.e.: PDO, PGI, TSG), such as cheese, ham, jam and fruit compote, etc, which have to respect strict rules about their production, would get a “red label” in reason of their composition. Conversely, other products could freely be reformulated in order to get a “green label”, changing the content of fat, sugar or salt.

This “traffic light” labelling would thus be in contraposition with the European quality policies because, on the one hand, PDO, PGI, TSG goods are recognised as “quality products” at European level and, on the other hand, getting a “red label”, they could be identified as “bad products” and consequently refused by the consumers.

Moreover, even though the above mentioned system has been presented as a “voluntary agreement” between the Government and the interested parties, it seems that major retailers have signed up for such a scheme with the consequence of hindering the free movement of goods.

As a matter of fact, recent surveys have shown that the application of this system is unjustifiably penalizing many quality products because consumers are changing their purchasing behaviour, as a result of a the application of such labelling system.

The delegations of Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Spain would like to receive an update from the Commission on the foreseen initiatives on this sensitive issue.
