



**COUNCIL OF
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Council agrees on new labelling rules for food

The Council in charge of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer affairs (EPSCO) today reached political agreement, at first reading, on a draft regulation on food information to consumers ([16555/10](#)). This new piece of legislation is aimed to ensure that food labels carry essential information in a clear and legible way, enabling herewith consumers to make informed and balanced dietary choices.

One of the key elements agreed by the Council is the mandatory nature of the nutrition declaration: the labelling of the energy value and the quantities of some nutrients (fat, saturates, carbohydrates, protein, sugars and salt) should become compulsory.

As a general principle, the energy value and the amounts of these nutrients would have to be expressed per 100g or per 100ml, but could also be indicated as a percentage of reference intakes. However, food business operators could also use additional forms of expression or presentation as long as certain conditions are met (e.g. they do not mislead consumers and are supported by evidence of understanding of such forms of expression or presentation by the average consumer). All elements of the nutrition declaration should appear together in the same field of vision but some elements may be repeated on the “front of pack”.

The Council also agreed that the labelling of the country of origin should, as currently, be compulsory if a failure to do so would mislead the consumers. Moreover, compulsory labelling of the country of origin would be requested for several types of meat (porc, lamb, and poultry), subject to implementing rules.¹ In addition, the Commission should submit within three years after the entry into force of the new regulation a report examining the possible extension of the compulsory labelling of the country of origin to further products (milk, milk used as an ingredient, meat used as an ingredient, unprocessed foods, single-ingredient products, ingredients that represent more than 50% of a food).

¹ Beef is already subject of compulsory labelling of the country of origin through a separate piece of legislation.

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Furthermore, the Council agreed to exempt certain alcoholic beverages (such as wines, products derived from aromatized wines, mead, beer, spirits, but not alcopops) from nutrition labelling rules as well as from the indication of the list of ingredients. The Commission should, however, examine within five years after the entry into force of the new regulation if this exemption is still justified.

Non-prepacked food would also be exempted from nutrition labelling, unless member states decide otherwise. Allergens, however, must always be indicated.

Finally, the Council fixed a minimum font size for the mandatory information on the labelling which, added to other criteria, such as contrast, is aimed to ensure the legibility of the labels.

The text of the political agreement reached by the Council will now be reviewed legally and linguistically before it is formally adopted at one of the forthcoming Council session as its first-reading position. This text would then be forwarded to the European Parliament for its second reading. The European Parliament adopted its first-reading position on 16 June 2010 (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/en/pressroom/content/20100615IPR76127>).
