

Press Release

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National decrees on mandatory origin labelling for milk and dairy products: the EU Commission failed to defend the core principles of the Union

The European Dairy Association (EDA), the voice of the European dairy processors, stands against the introduction of national rules on mandatory origin labelling for milk and dairy products and firmly supports the European legislation on voluntary origin labelling.

“Today, the French draft decree on mandatory origin labelling has been approved by the EU Commission – and the European Commission clearly failed to protect the single market principle, which is from a political point of view a worst case scenario for the Union”, stated Alexander Anton, EDA secretary general.

“We have seen the French proposal going viral across Europe – the Italian government has already notified a draft decree, and others will certainly follow the French example. This translates as the end of the single market principle for milk and dairy products”.

“We are proud of the many dairies in border regions, most of which are rather small companies that have up to five EU Member States in their milk collection area. They lived from the single market in producing high quality milk and dairy with milk from their geographical region, even if national borders go through their milk collection area. This will now be made very complicated, if not impossible”, complains Alexander Anton.

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The EU Commission has decided to go back to national markets for milk and dairy and to curb down the competitiveness of our sector. The effect of mandatory origin labelling, as stated by the [EDA position statement](#), will be an added cost for processors, which will have consequences at all levels of the dairy chain, from farmers to consumers.

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EDA reminds that the exemptions set out in the Food Information Regulation¹ related to “national measures on additional mandatory particulars”, consider the mandatory indication of the country of origin only where there is a proven link between certain qualities of the food and its origin or provenance. The French decree fails to comply with this, as harmonised European legislation ensures the similarity of the quality of milk. In addition to the exemption, Member States have to provide evidence that the majority of consumers attach significant value to product’s origin information. Various reports have indeed shown that consumers prefer to have information on the origin of their food. However, consumers are only moderately prepared to pay for this information; they consider it likable to know, nevertheless it is not the most important factor in their choice. This has also been clearly underlined in the relevant report² of the European Commission which evaluated mandatory and voluntary origin labelling for milk and dairy, published in May 2015.

“The other issue is that the French decree is said to be established for a testing period only while the French government did not set out the criteria to evaluate its ‘success’. The European Commission is therefore allowing France to test the end of the single market, knowing that once the supply chain is adapted to this regime, the single market is over”, says EDA secretary general Alexander Anton.

Finally, EDA would like to reiterate its position that only voluntary origin labelling is an option for milk and dairy products. As the European Commission’s report² highlighted, EDA would suggest that the existing options for voluntary labelling do address consumer demand, really adding value to the sector, while retaining flexibility for member states and food operators by providing the information consumers require.

¹ Regulation 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2011 on the provision of food information to consumers

² http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk/origin-labelling/com-2015-205_en.pdf

ABOUT THE EUROPEAN DAIRY ASSOCIATION

The European Dairy Association voices the interests of dairy processors in the European Union. The membership of EDA consists of the associations of dairy processors in EU Member States.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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