

Press Release

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National laws on mandatory origin labelling for milk and dairy products: we urgently call on the EU Commission to defend the core single market 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.

In a few days, the French draft decree on mandatory origin labelling will be assessed by the EU Commission. EDA wishes to remind that two of the main pillars of the European Union could be threatened if the European Commission concedes and authorises the French decree.

"If the Commission president says that things apply differently for France, then this really damages the credibility of the Commission as guardian of the Treaty". This last week's quote of Eurogroup President Jeroen Dijsselbloem is also true for the single market.

On the one side, the protection of the **single market principle** as stated in the EU Treaty and on the other side, the prevention of unjustified non-tariff barriers to trade as affirmed by the WTO agreements, should be a priority of the EU legislator.

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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 legal requirement, as the French notification does not give any indication for any specific, origin related quality of milk that is milked in France. In addition to the exemption, Member States must prove that the majority of consumers attach significant value to the product's origin information.

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“Another issue”, explains EDA secretary general Alexander Anton, “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 the ‘success’ of the testing period. If the European Commission allows the French government to test the suspension of the single market, this would mean that once the supply chain is adapted to this regime, the single market is over”.

For these reasons the French draft decree, if adopted, would represent a dangerous precedent in the consolidation of those principles in a European and international trade framework. As a consequence of the French draft decree, the Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and other governments will most probably follow the French example and this would translate in the end of the single market for the milk and dairy sector.

If the EU Commission decided to go back to national markets for milk and dairy, the effect of mandatory origin labelling, as specified by the [EDA position statement](#), would be an added cost for processors, which would have consequences at all levels of the dairy chain from farmers to consumers and it would heavily impact the EU single market for milk and dairy in changing the sourcing practices in France.

The best solution, as underlined by the report² of the European Commission published in May 2015, would be a **voluntary origin labelling** for milk and dairy. Indeed, a well-designed approach on origin labelling would be the solution to do address the consumer demands and really adding value to the sector while retaining flexibility for member states and food operators by giving 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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