



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

**Ad-hoc Working Group of the
Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health
on the**

**Commission's report regarding the mandatory labelling of the list of ingredients and the
nutrition declaration of alcoholic beverages**

4 April 2017, Brussels

Summary Record

1. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was a non-public meeting organised for the members of the Advisory Group and some non-members having an interest in the Commission's report regarding the mandatory labelling of the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration of alcoholic beverages.

2. List of points discussed

The only point for discussion was the Commission's report regarding the mandatory labelling of the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration of alcoholic beverages.

The Commission firstly explained that the purpose of the meeting was to present the report focussing on the background and the conclusions, to clarify any issues that are unclear and to exchange on how the sector can build on the conclusions of the report.

The Commission recalled its legal obligation laid down in Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 on food information to consumers to adopt a report addressing in particular whether alcoholic beverages should in future be covered by the obligation to provide a list of ingredients and a nutrition declaration and the reason justifying possible exemptions. The conclusions of the report were presented. The right of consumers to be fully informed about what they drink should be supported and no objective grounds justifying the absence of the list of ingredients and nutrition information on alcoholic beverages have been identified. The list of ingredients and the nutrition information are key information that helps consumers to make more informed and healthier choices, however, consumers are not necessarily aware of the generally various ingredients used in the production process of alcoholic beverages and of their nutritional value. In recent years, voluntary initiatives from the sector to provide the list of ingredients or nutrition information on alcoholic beverages have been developed and a number of alcoholic beverages present on the EU market already bear the list of ingredients, the nutrition declaration or both, demonstrating the awareness of the sector as regards consumer expectations, its willingness to address such expectations and that the sector is increasingly prepared to provide responses to consumers' expectations to know what they are drinking. The Commission considers that the initiative should be left to the sector, as a first

stage, and invites the alcoholic beverages' industry to develop, within a year, a self-regulatory concerted proposal aiming to provide the list of ingredients and nutrition information on alcoholic beverages enabling consumers to make informed choices. In order to avoid any misunderstanding or confusion from the consumers and to allow comparisons between the different types of alcoholic beverages, the industry's proposal should be a single and harmonised proposal covering all types of alcoholic beverages. Should the Commission consider the self-regulatory approach proposed by the industry as unsatisfactory, it would then launch an impact assessment to review further available options to ensure proper consumer information in line with Better Regulation principles.

The floor was then opened to the participants to comment on the content of the report or to ask for clarification.

Brewers of Europe welcomed the report and the confidence given to industry to solve the issue of labelling. They stated that the EU legal framework is clear on voluntary information and that they are ready to sit down with the whole industry of alcoholic beverages and other stakeholders to address the Commission's invitation.

Eurocare welcomed the report and stressed that consumers have the right to be informed about what they drink as it is the case for other foods and that labels remain the best option to inform consumers on the ingredients and on nutrition information. They reminded that the EU remains the biggest consumer of alcohol.

The *Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins* welcomed the report and highlighted that they are willing to provide further information to consumers but in an adapted manner. They consider that the legal framework for voluntary information has to be clarified. They stressed that the problematic substances such as allergens are already indicated on the label and that wine is the most transparent product as an EU vertical legislation exists on wine. They are willing to continue meeting with the other alcohol sectors. Clarifications were requested about the assessment of the self-regulation to be performed by the Commission and possible diverging views between the different sectors of alcoholic beverages.

Spirits Europe welcomed the report and thanked for the acknowledgement in the report of the private initiatives launched by the different sectors. They recalled that alcohol has been exempted for 30 years and consider that existing rules for other foods should not necessarily apply to alcohol. They also mentioned that in accordance with the Regulation on food information to consumers, the information to consumers should be meaningful and not misleading and that allergens are already indicated on labels. They asked whether the self-regulation will be assessed by the Commission under the 10 criteria set by the Commission's document called 'Principles for Better Self- and Co-Regulation'. They also asked for a clarification of the definition of primary ingredients.

The *European Federation of Origin Wine* welcomed the report and acknowledged that consumers have the right to be informed. They stressed that wine is an agricultural product where the composition varies in time and that many small producers are active in this sector. They considered that informing through the label is not the best approach and that other ways exist. They look forward to work with the other sectors.

The *Bureau Européen des Unions des Consommateurs* welcomed the report and considered that consumers have the right to be informed and saw no reasons for the existing exemptions.

They expressed doubts about a successful outcome of the self-regulatory approach.

European Cider and Fruit Wine Associations welcomed the report but stressed that the margin of manoeuvre left by the EU legislation in the context of the self-regulation is very limited.

FoodDrinkEurope stressed that they are willing to assist the sector in the context of the self-regulation and to facilitate the process.

Copa-Cogeca considered that all producers should not be treated the same and in particular, the small producers in the wine sector for which it will be difficult to comply with any new labelling rules.

Eurocommerce asked for clarifications about the assessment by the Commission of the self-regulation and in particular about the criteria on the basis of which it will be assessed.

3. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

The Commission concluded by clarifying that:

- The ball is in the camp of the alcohol industry to propose a harmonised self-regulatory approach. The different sectors of this industry are expected to show willingness to collaborate across sectors, to work together in a structured and systematic manner. There are other initiatives of self-regulation by industry that they should look in.
- According to the Regulation on food information to consumers, voluntary information provided on or off label should comply with the rules. The nutrition declaration can be limited to the energy value and it can also be expressed by portion.
- Allergens being part of Annex II of the Regulation have already to be indicated on labels, however, those not being part of this list do not have to be labelled. The presence of the list of ingredients on alcohol beverages would further protect allergic people.
- Wine is not the only sector where small producers are active.
- As regards the assessment of the self-regulation, the Commission would indicatively look at the robustness of the self-regulation, the level of adherence, the content, the mechanisms put in place to control compliance with the commitments and the monitoring.

List of participating organisations:

Members of the Advisory Group

BEUC Bureau européen des unions de consommateurs
CEFIC Conseil européen des fédérations de l'industrie chimique
COPA-COGECA Comité des organisations professionnelles agricoles de l'UE
EHPM

European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers
EUROCOMMERCE European Representation of Retail, Wholesale and International Trade
FOODDRINK EUROPE Confederation des industries agroalimentaires
HOTREC Hotels, Restaurants & Cafés in Europe
INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE

Non-members

AICV European Cider and Fruit Wine Association
CEEV Comité Européen des Entreprises Vins
CEVI European Confederation of Independent Winegrowers
EUROCARE European Alcohol Policy Alliance
EFOW European Federation of Origin Wines
EPHA European Public Health Alliance
SPIRITS EUROPE
THE BREWERS OF Europe