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Bad news: EU Parliament allows use of unnecessary phosphates in kebabs

The European Parliament just failed – by three votes – to block a proposal from the EU Commission to authorise the use of phosphates in döner kebabs and gyros¹. Although phosphate additives are not allowed in these meat preparations, some producers have been unlawfully adding them in kebab meat sold across the EU. There are concerns over their health effects and their water-binding properties, which manufacturers could abuse to bulk out meat with water.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

“Phosphates have no place in kebabs and gyros. Sadly, MEPs have decided to authorise these unnecessary additives. There are concerns over the impact of phosphate additives on consumers’ health. So it is wiser to wait for the EU Food Safety Authority’s evaluation before considering to allow them in more foodstuffs.² Some manufacturers manage to produce phosphate-free kebabs and gyros and should serve as an example.

“Now we need Member States to require that kebab vendors clearly inform consumers on the presence of phosphates in their meat through labelling and check they do so. That’s the very least they should do. Member States should also tighten up checks on the use of additives in the meat sector.³ This is essential to prevent similar stories from happening again.”

Notes:

1. The EU Parliament voted down an [objection](#) to the EU Commission proposal, rejecting the opinion of the Parliament’s ENVI Committee from 28 November. The objection required an absolute majority (376 votes) to be adopted; it only secured 373 votes in favour.
2. The EU Food Safety Authority is due to review its opinion on phosphates’ safety by end 2018.
3. A recent [report](#)³ found poor controls and incorrect interpretations of EU legislation on food additives in the meat sector in several Member States.

Read our [letter](#) to all MEPs ahead of today’s vote.