

Brussels, 30th June 2010

BEUC's reaction to wrong reports about nutrition profile claims

In recent days, there have been many cases of media reports on misleading claims made by the food industry regarding EU legislation on nutrient profile claims. For instance, some reported that the packaging of Nutella, the Ferrero hazelnut spread, would have to be labelled 'dangerous for health' or 'enhances obesity'. This is simply wrong.

European consumers and decision makers have been given inaccurate information about the objectives and the impact of the legislation on nutrient profiles.

BEUC therefore would like to point out some facts:

When the European Parliament voted against the 'traffic light' system of food labelling in June 2010, one of the few consolations for European consumers' organisations was that MEPs did not give in to attempts to revoke another already existing 'nutrient profiles' legislation.

- The aim of this European legislation on nutrient profiles, which is distinct from the legislation on food information currently under negotiation in the EU institutions, is to prevent claims masking the true nature of foods. The legislation therefore is a tool to avoid misleading consumers and to facilitate healthy dietary choices. This regulation on health and nutrition claims was passed in 2007 in order to ensure that consumers could rely on scientifically accurate information regarding any food or drink product on sale in the EU. However, the use of health and nutrient claims will depend on nutrient profiles, which determine which products will be able to bear these claims. These nutrient profiles are currently being defined by the European Commission with the aim of not allowing misleading health or nutrition claims on products which are very high in saturated fat, salt or sugar.
- Nutrient profiles will neither ban any food, nor oblige manufacturers to label them as 'dangerous'. Instead, they will ensure that a claim made to promote food is not misleading. The objective is to prevent industry making claims by advertising them as 'healthy' or 'good for kids' while it contains high amounts of saturated fats and sugar.

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