

Contact: Pauline Constant: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 18/01/2019
Reference: BEUC-PR-2019-001

EU Commission misses deadline by 10 years to tackle misleading use of food claims

This Saturday January 19th will mark 10 years that the EU Commission has failed to publish 'nutrient profiles', as required by law. This important tool would stop the food industry from making unhealthy foods and drinks looking healthier than they are. Nutrient profiles would restrict the use of claims such as "source of calcium" or "boosts the immune system" on foods high in sugar or fat.

Consumer organisations have repeatedly called on the Commission to set up such profiles over the last decade. In 2018, BEUC and 11 of its member organisations found numerous examples of unhealthy foods marketed as being healthy across the EU market. One year later, still nothing has happened.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, has commented:

"The EU Commission has regrettably turned a deaf ear to our longstanding calls. Consumers have been misled by countless claims which disguise unhealthy foods as healthy options. The Commission could have stopped the tricks 10 years ago, had it fulfilled its duties.

"This delay is all the more unacceptable as weight issues are soaring in Europe. More than half of Europeans are overweight and run higher risks to develop diseases such as diabetes.¹ Because appealing messages can strongly influence consumers when they buy foods or drinks, only healthy products deserve a claim.

"Nutrient profiles need to be adopted urgently to enable consumers to make healthier choices. Consumer organisations are waiting for the EU Commission to publish a report² on this issue before it leaves office at the time of the European elections."

BEUC Director General Monique Goyens has blown out candles to denounce this 10-year 'non-anniversary' in a [video](#).

Background:

The solution to prevent unhealthy foods from appearing healthier than they are by claiming nutrition or health benefits is to use [nutrient profiles](#). They would act as a filter to decide

¹ World Health Organization Regional office for Europe, [Data and Statistics](#).

² The Commission is to publish a REFIT report looking into the feasibility of nutrient profiles

whether products are healthy enough to deserve a claim by setting maximum levels of nutrients-of-concern e.g. fat and sugar.

The EU adopted legislation³ providing for these profiles in 2006. The Commission was required by law to publish them in 2009. But 10 years later, there is still no sign of them. Instead, the Commission has initiated an evaluation ('REFIT') of the Claims Regulation, which will examine whether the profiles are still needed.

More information:

[BEUC Factsheet](#) on nutrient profiles

[Photo gallery](#) of claims examples found across Europe

ENDS

³ Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on food

