



The Consumer Voice in Europe



Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker
President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B – 1049 Brussels

Ref.: BEUC-X-2016-032/MGO/cm

Brussels, 8th April, 2016

Re: Consumer Organisations support the draft French Decree on country of origin labelling

Dear President Juncker,

We write on behalf of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and the French consumer organizations UFC-Que Choisir and CLCV to **express our support for the draft French law on country of origin labelling** for meat in processed foods and milk in dairy products.

70% of Europeans have said they want to know where their food comes from¹. The percentage is higher for meat and milk – when sold fresh or used as an ingredient – for which over eight in ten EU consumers want to know the origin^{2,3}.

Leaving it to food makers to decide whether or not to provide information about the food's origin falls short of consumers' expectations. Just two months ago, a survey⁴ by UFC-Que Choisir revealed that more than 50% of products in French supermarkets (including sausages, ready-meals, sandwiches, etc.) failed to indicate the origin of the meat. This study revealed that **voluntary labels could be found in all categories** of food products, meaning that labelling of origin does not have to be confined to single ingredient products. UFC-Que Choisir found that the labelling depends entirely on the individual company's policy, meaning that some companies label 100% of their products and others choose not to label any. This clearly supports the setting up of **mandatory origin labelling**, at least for those foods/ingredients for which consumers' interest is the strongest.

The Food Information to Consumers (FIC) legislation (1169/2011) allows EU Member States to introduce additional mandatory labelling particulars for specific food categories, including on their origin, if they are justified on grounds of protecting public health or that of consumers or, regarding mandatory origin indication, if there is evidence that a majority of consumers attach significant value to this information.

.../...

¹ BEUC (2013). [Where does my food come from?](#)

² European Commission (2013). [Report](#) on mandatory origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient in processed foods.

³ European Commission (2015). [Report](#) on mandatory origin labelling for milk and milk used as an ingredient in dairy products.

⁴ UFC – Que Choisir. Indication de l'origine des viandes dans les produits transformés à base de bœuf, de porc et de poulet. [Enquête](#) parue en février 2016.

There is ample evidence to support that French (and European) consumers want to know where their meat and milk come from. Most recently, a French petition⁵ calling on the European Commission to table legislative proposals for mandatory origin labelling of meat and milk used in processed foods gathered close to 25,000 signatures within just a few days.

Therefore we consider that the French decree is fully in line with the Food Information Regulation, as its main aim is to protect consumers and respond to their long standing demand for information on the origin of their food.

Finally, regarding the potential costs triggered by mandatory origin labelling, you are most certainly aware that there are diverging estimates⁶ and that calls have been made, including by Members of the European Parliament just two weeks ago⁷, for a deeper look into this issue. The French initiative will be an opportunity to generate first hand data to inform the debate on origin labelling at the European level.

We trust that you will take our views into account and we remain at your disposal for further discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Goyens
BEUC Director General

Reine-Claude Mader
CLCV President

Alain Bazot
UFC-Que Choisir President

⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/pour-un-etiquetage-obligatoire-de-l-origine-des-viandes>

⁶ A December 2013 [study](#) by BEUC French member UFC Que Choisir found that labelling the origin of beef in processed foods would entail negligible price increases (e.g. +1,51 cent for a pack of frozen lasagna).

⁷ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=IM-PRESS&reference=20160321IPR20300&language=IT&format=XML>