

Materials and articles intended to come into contact with food

2003/0272(COD) - 31/03/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report Astrid THORS (ELDR, FIN). A number of the amendments were aimed at aligning the draft legislation with other pieces of legislation in the field of food safety, e.g. the directives on additives and labelling and the 2002 regulation establishing the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The text is the result of a broad compromise between the Parliament and Council. It sets conditions which must be met by products and materials coming into direct or indirect contact with food which is to be put on the market. MEPs want specific provisions ensuring traceability of objects which remain in contact with food, notably to allow a more effective response if product withdrawal is necessary. This is one of the aims of proper labelling: from now on all materials and articles intended to be in contact with food must be labelled "suitable for food contact" or carry a special food contact symbol, unless its own name already makes that clear (e.g. 'coffee pot') or if by its nature such a use can be "reasonably" expected. MEPs want the information on the product to be worded in a language that can be easily understood by consumers. This must be their own language - plus possibly other EU languages - otherwise the product would not be officially authorised to go on sale. On the question of authorisation, MEPs have approved the current principle of positive lists of approved substances and materials, meaning that a material is not deemed to be approved merely because it has not been explicitly banned. Authorisations are the subject of specific rules, whether for a substance, a material, an object or a procedure. New procedures for placing materials on the market and evaluating them in terms of health safety are set out, including in particular procedures for recycled material. A Member State observing that a substance initially thought to be in conformity with the rules in fact presents a risk to public health will be able to suspend the authorisation for that product on its territory. Lastly, Parliament completed the text by insisting on the need to take the needs of developing countries into account.