

## CIAA Statement on Council Political Agreement on Food Labelling

(Brussels, 7 December 2010) The CIAA today takes note of the latest move by the Council in reaching a Political Agreement for its Common Position on the Regulation on the provision of food information to consumers. This marks a necessary next step in the co-decision procedure for this new draft law, after which, the text will revert to the European Parliament for the Second Reading phase.

CIAA welcomes EU harmonisation in relation to food information and strongly believes that EU harmonisation is the only means to guarantee the Single Market and the free movement of goods, whilst protecting the legitimate interest of producers and enabling consumers to make informed food choices.

Following on from this, and as regards the Council's Political Agreement, food and drink manufacturers welcome the fact that the merits of the EU-wide GDA scheme have now been reconfirmed not only by the European Parliament in its First Reading, but also by the Council through its Political Agreement for a Common Position.

Nevertheless, concerns remain over the possibility for Member States to introduce national 'voluntary' initiatives in terms of 'forms of expression/presentation', as it would still allow for the proliferation of schemes across the EU which would create barriers to trade and fragment the Single Market.

In addition, it is regrettable that the Council has deleted the possibility to repeat 'energy only' front-of-pack (FOP) on a voluntary basis within the scope of its Political Agreement. Research shows that consumers find the provision of energy FOP (expressed in GDAs *per portion*) most useful when making informed food choices<sup>1</sup>.

Another issue which remains a key concern for food manufacturers is the potential extension of mandatory country of origin labelling (COOL) to specific food categories and products, beyond the mandatory requirements already under existing EU legislation.

The CIAA believes in maintaining the existing scope of EU law on COOL; this requires for the origin of the product to be labelled when the absence to do so may mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the food. Moreover, we believe that any potential extension of existing rules for mandatory COOL should be preceded by a sound impact assessment.

On the issue of legibility, the Council agreed on a minimum font size of 1.2 mm (X height) and 0.9mm for packages smaller than 60cm<sup>2</sup>. The CIAA believes that font size is not the only criterion in terms of defining legibility; criteria such as font type, contrast between the font and background, line and character pitch should be considered also. To this end, the CIAA has developed a set of best practice "Legibility Guidelines" which take these variables into account and which offer a more workable tool based on a 'case-by-case' application ensuring that the information on a wide variety of food and drink products is legible for consumers.

Finally, a number of important technical issues remain to be discussed and agreed upon, which, we hope, will be given due consideration by all EU institutions involved in this process prior to finalising what is an important piece of EU food legislation.

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CIAA represents the food and drink industries of the EU – the largest manufacturing sector, major employer and exporter in the EU. CIAA's mission is to represent the food and drink industries' interests, at the level of European and international institutions, in order to contribute to the development of a legislative and economic framework addressing the competitiveness of industry, food quality and safety, consumer protection and respect for the environment. CIAA membership is made up of 26 national federations, including 3 observers, 26 European sector associations and 20 major food and drink companies. For more information on CIAA and its activities, please visit: [www.ciaa.eu](http://www.ciaa.eu)

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<sup>i</sup> EUFIC "Pan-European consumer research on in-store observation, understanding and use of nutrition information on food labels, combined with assessing nutrition knowledge". "