

CPE
European
Farmers
Coordination



Dear Sirs,

We, the undersigned, are a group of organisations who have worked closely with the European Institutions for many years, across a broad range of issues, and who now find ourselves sharing a common position regarding the important issue of beef labelling in the EU: we believe that beef labels should continue to mention national origin.

In developing mechanisms to safeguard the environment, animal welfare and the economic needs of smaller scale farmers, the role of the market and the ability of consumers to make an informed choice has been key. We have always held that meat labelling has the potential to support local markets, while mitigating the environmental and animal welfare concerns associated with the transport of livestock.

We were therefore encouraged by the findings of the recent Commission report on EC Regulation 1760/2000 (*the identification and registration of bovine animals and the labelling of beef*) that the current system has indeed effected a change in purchasing patterns towards locally produced beef. This confirms our findings from within Member States that consumers tend to favour buying locally produced; born, bred and slaughtered beef. They attribute greater quality and trust to meat from their own country.

The same report, that was under discussion at the meeting of the Special Committee on Agriculture on Monday 10th May, raises the possibility of operators being allowed to label beef as being of European, rather than national, origin.

We feel it is important that consumers are allowed to make informed choices on the basis of origin. We believe doing otherwise would run counter to the objectives of the CAP, which through rural development aim at improving the way animals are kept and consumer information through labelling. In accordance with the Treaty of Amsterdam, both in its redefinition of animals as sentient beings rather than agricultural goods, and the obligation it places on the Community to provide “*a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment*” we urge the Community to carefully consider the broader dimensions of this issue and resist any moves to undermine the national labelling system

Yours faithfully,

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