

(2000/C 303 E/182)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0231/00**by Nicole Thomas-Mauro (UEN) to the Commission***(4 February 2000)**Subject: White Paper on Food Safety*

The White Paper on Food Safety contains plans to establish a network of contacts between the European Food Authority and similar agencies, namely national agencies and institutions with responsibility for food safety. What form will such cooperation take, however? To what extent will divergent opinions expressed by national agencies be heeded?

Answer given by Mr Byrne on behalf of the Commission*(6 March 2000)*

The white paper on food safety⁽¹⁾ adopted by the Commission on 12 January 2000 contains an outline for the structure and functioning of the future European food authority. The Commission has called for comments before the end of April 2000. In the meantime, reflections continue in order to refine the concepts contained in the white paper. In any event, the European food authority will need to work in close co-operation with other scientific bodies in the Member States and elsewhere. By implementing the principles of independence, excellence and transparency, the Authority should progressively command trust and respect and to achieve recognition as the most authoritative source of advice and information.

⁽¹⁾ COM(1999) 719 final.

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WRITTEN QUESTION E-0232/00**by Nicole Thomas-Mauro (UEN) to the Commission***(4 February 2000)**Subject: White Paper on Food Safety*

Why does the White Paper take a more cautious approach to health claims than the more flexible national arrangements? Why does the Commission not propose a precise framework enabling health claims to be put to reasonable use?

Answer given by Mr Liikanen on behalf of the Commission*(9 March 2000)*

Article 2 of Council Directive 79/112/EEC of 18 December 1978 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs⁽¹⁾ for sale to the ultimate customer states that the above must not attribute to any foodstuff the property of preventing, treating or curing a human disease, or refer to such properties. The claims regarding the reduced likelihood of contracting an illness derive from that ban.

As stated in the White Paper on Food Safety⁽²⁾, the Commission feels that no changes to the principle of that provision are called for.

As provided for in the White Paper the Commission will, however, examine whether it is appropriate to introduce into Community law any specific provisions governing nutritional and operational claims concerning the beneficial effects of a given nutrient on certain normal bodily functions. Laying down a stringent framework for this type of claim will constitute an initial stage in an overall commitment to provide consumers with reliable science-based information that is appropriate to the nature of those products, thus enabling them to make choices that are beneficial to their health and general welfare.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 33, 8.2.1979. Directive as last amended by Directive 97/4/EC OJ L 43, 14.2.1997.

⁽²⁾ COM(1999) 719 final.