

Opinion on the proposal for a Council Directive amending for the fifth time Directive 74/329/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to emulsifiers, stabilizers, thickeners and gelling agents for use in foodstuffs

(88/C 337/02)

On 1 July 1988 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 100 A of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community on the abovementioned proposal.

The Committee instructed its sections for protection of the environment, public health and consumer affairs to prepare its work on the matter. The section adopted its Opinion on 4 October 1988. (Rapporteur: Mrs Williams; co-rapporteurs: Mr Riera-Marsa and Mr Saiu).

At its 259th plenary session (meeting of 27 October 1988) the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion unanimously.

1. General

All the emulsifiers and stabilizers covered by this proposal are currently in Annex II of the Directive 74/329/EEC. This means that Member States may permit their use but need not do so. Only some Member States permit the use of all those substances at present. These differences are due to historical reasons pre-dating the EEC. They also pre-date many of the safety-in-use tests which have now been carried out.

Given the results of safety-in-use tests stretching over many years, the Commission proposes transferring these products to Annex I and making them generally available throughout the EEC. This had already been proposed in 1984 and generally approved by the Economic and Social Committee and Parliament. However, the Council has prevaricated on any action and this new proposal therefore has become necessary. It takes into account further safety-in-use tests carried out since 1984.

The Committee supports the Commission proposal to transfer the substances concerned from Annex II (temporary list) to Annex I (permanent list), thus abolishing Annex II, and with the proposed implementation date of 1 January 1989.

The Committee notes, however, that a further more comprehensive proposal on the conditions of use of these and other substances will be put forward by the Commission in due course and that this will be of significance within the framework of the achievement of the internal market by 1992.

2. Tragacanth gum — E413

2.1. This gum originates from a shrub grown in Iran and Turkey. It is highly resistant to acid and is therefore used in salad dressings and mayonnaise. It also gives a very thick paste, making it useful for flour confectionery.

2.2. Both the Joint Expert Committee on food additives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (JECFA) and the Scientific Committee for food (SCF) have evaluated it and have given a non-specified (i.e. unlimited) acceptable daily intake (ADI).

2.3. The Committee approves the Commission's present proposal.

3. Karaya gum — E416

3.1. This is a gum from a plant grown particularly in India. While its main use is as a thickener in medicines, it also has a specialized use in a number of foods.

3.2. The SCF has recently given an ADI of 0-12,5 mg/kg body weight, while JECFA has given a non-specified ADI. The reason for the difference is that JECFA was able to include some recent Indian safety-in-use studies in its evaluation.

3.3. The Committee maintains its previous advice⁽¹⁾ endorsing the Commission's proposal, viz. that following further research by the SCF a more extensive authorization of this substance may be allowed and that it can be transferred from Annex II to Annex I.

4. Polysorbates — E432 to E436

4.1. These are a family of esters prepared from polyoxyethylene and fatty acids. They are very efficient emulsifiers for oil in water. The exact properties vary with the fatty acid portion, thus allowing the lipophilic

⁽¹⁾ JO No C 248, 17. 9. 1984, p. 28 and 29.

properties to be adjusted exactly to the food product being manufactured.

4.2. JECFA has evaluated polysorbates at 0-25 mg/kg body weight and the SCF at 10 mg/kg body weight.

4.3. The Economic and Social Committee maintains its previous position endorsing the Commission's proposal, viz. that it notes that the SCF considers that these substances are now acceptable for inclusion in Annex I.

5. Thermally oxidized soya bean oil — E479

5.1. This product consists of mono- and di-glycerides of fatty acids reacted with soya bean oil and is used mainly as an anti-spattering agent for margarine when the latter is used for frying.

5.2. The SCF has given an ADI of 0-25 mg/kg body weight. JECFA has had no request to consider it so far.

Here too the Committee endorses the Commission's proposal

Done at Brussels, 27 October 1988.

*The Chairman
of the Economic and Social Committee*

Alberto MASPRONE
