

# Briefing document

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## **Mandatory origin labelling for meat**

### Background:

Following the BSE crisis, the indication of the country of birth, rearing and slaughter on (prepacked and non-prepacked) unprocessed beef meat and beef products (e.g. minced beef) became mandatory. A new [regulation 1169/2011](#), adopted in October 2011, introduces the principle of compulsory origin labelling for unprocessed sheep and goat meat, pigmeat, and poultrymeat (1). At the same time, the text also acknowledges the need to explore the possibility of extending mandatory origin labelling for other specific categories of foods on the basis of Commission reports, including meat of all species when used as an ingredient in pre-packed foods (2).

### **Worth noting:**

According to an [EU survey](#) published in 2014, a large majority of Europeans believe it is necessary to be able to identify the origin of all types of meat: 88% share this view, 60% of whom believe that this traceability is “totally necessary”.

However, only a small majority of respondents (53%, against 42%) are prepared to pay a little more (1-2%) to see information on place of origin appear on the labels of other types of meat.

### **1/ The labelling rules for unprocessed pigmeat:**

After lengthy discussions in late 2013, Member States agreed implementing rules for mandatory origin labelling for meat ([Regulation 1337/2013](#)).

As of April 2015, the label has to indicate where the animal was reared and slaughtered, but not where it was born. The approach chosen consists in detailing in which Member State or third country the main production stages took place.

For minced meat there is a derogation; since it may come from different sources, the label only has to indicate whether the animals were reared and slaughtered in the EU or in non-EU countries. A mix of both can be labelled accordingly, indicating both origins.

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## 2/ The labelling of meat used as an ingredient

On 17 December 2013, the Commission adopted a [report on mandatory origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient](#) (e.g. beef, pig meat, poultry, sheep and goat meat, game, rabbit meat, horse meat). The report weighs up the need for the consumer to be informed, the feasibility of introducing mandatory origin labelling and provides a cost/benefit analysis including the impact on the single market and international trade.

On one hand, the report shows that **consumers' interest in origin labelling is not reflected in the consumer's willingness to pay the additional cost that would be incurred in providing that information** (At price increases of less than 10%, the consumers' willingness to pay falls by 60-80%). However, on the other hand, it concludes that **introducing mandatory origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient** (e.g. mandatory origin labelling either based on EU/non EU indication or indicating the specific Member State or third country) **would necessarily increase operating costs for business (by up to 50%)** as more detailed information and a full traceability system would be required.

The report considers two other, less costly, options (voluntary labelling and labelling indicating only EU/non-EU origin) and invites Parliament and Council to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the options.

In March 2014, the Council had a discussion on the findings of this report. Member States showed substantially diverging views on the issue. All, nevertheless, acknowledged the need for further technical discussions on the different options, such as the threshold of meat present in the product that would trigger mandatory labelling, or the possibility to start with beef and then extend to other meat.

Since the publication of the report, the European Parliament has voted several resolutions supporting compulsory country of origin labelling on the basis that it would help fight food fraud and boost consumer confidence. In its [resolution of 11 February 2015](#) on meat in processed foods, MEPs urged the Commission to come up with legislative proposals to make the indication of the origin of meat in processed foods mandatory, in order to ensure greater transparency throughout the food chain and to inform European consumers better.



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## **What's next?:**

On 12 May 2016, the European Parliament adopted an additional resolution calling for wider food origin label for processed meat, milk, single-ingredients goods and ingredients making up over 50% of a food. According to the MEPs, the most pressing issue here would be to provide origin labels for dairy products and meat products (i.e bacon, sausages).

Although the resolution is not legally binding, it will put more political pressure on the Commission to look again at this legislation.

## **Further information: contact:**

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