

Stricter and simpler rules on food for vulnerable consumers

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The European Parliament today adopted a report on the European Commission's Regulation on "Food intended for infants and young children and food intended for special medical purposes", drafted by ALDE MEP Fr derique Ries (MR, Belgium), which defines concrete steps towards improving safety and quality of infant formulae, baby food products and products for vulnerable people in the European Union.

The ALDE Group is disappointed by the long-awaited reform of EU rules governing baby food, special diet and low-calorie food. Progress was finally agreed between the European Parliament and the European Council whereby specialised foods such as dietetic, sports, infants foods and food for people who are seriously ill will be maintained by regulatory system PARNUTS (Foods for Particular Nutritional Purposes).

The report recommends the better protection for this category of consumers and distinguishes more clearly between foods for normal consumption and foods for specific groups.

Rules on the labelling of baby milks up to the age of 12 months including follow-on formula will not include any pictures of infants or other pictures that might suggest specific health benefits.

The report also calls for a review of legislation for milk for children aged 12-36 months (growing-up milks) and suggests new rules should be implemented.

Special gluten and lactose labelling rules will also help to inform those purchasing these products in case of specific allergies.

The report also aims to ensure that pesticide residues in these products are reduced to a minimum so as to reduce the risk of physiological sensitivity of young children.

ALDE MEP Fr derique Ries, European Parliament's rapporteur, said:

"Infants, young children and seriously ill people are not like other consumers. It is our duty as legislators to set more stringent rules to define the composition and labeling of foodstuffs that are for these particular consumers. It was urgent to make a complete review of the old 1977 legislation which is completely obsolete given the reality of the market today. The market is a jungle where we want to clearly differentiate between those specific foods for them, and other foodstuffs such as athletic foods and diet foods which do not deserve this special status".

The "PARNUTS" food sector represents about 2% of the EU food market.