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UK scrambles to keep 'dozen eggs' in EU battle

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/10432128.stm

Adapted from BBC News 28.06.2010 © BBC MMX by Laurence Peter

UK food producers are lobbying to retain labelling by numbers

UK officials say they will defend food producers' right to label groceries by number, amid fears that the EU may consign "a dozen" eggs to history. Efforts to standardise food labels across the 27-nation EU have gained



momentum with new draft legislation going through the European Parliament.

MEPs **backed** labels indicating weight or volume, but rejected labels that just show the number of items in a pack.

A UK minister said the EU should allow shoppers to buy eggs by the dozen. "We know what customers want. They want to buy eggs by the dozen and they should be allowed to - a point I shall be making clear to our partners in Europe," said UK Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman.

Conservative MEP Syed Kamall warned that "millions of pounds could be wasted by shops and bakers having to **change** packaging just to comply" with the new legislation.

Too many cooks?

EU countries **currently** have exemptions allowing some pre-packed foods to be labelled by number alone - for example, a dozen eggs or four bread rolls.

The UK online trade magazine The Grocer warned that the legislation "could even see special unit-based promotional packs offering 'eight chocolate bars for the price of six' **banned**".

Earlier this month MEPs adopted **numerous** amendments to the new European Commission directive on food labelling. The legislation will now be considered by EU government ministers before a second reading in the parliament. Agreement on a final text could be reached by the end of this year.

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The Labour Party leader in the parliament, Glenis Willmott MEP, voiced regret that in its current form the legislation would not allow some products to be sold simply by number. The parliament rejected an amendment which said: "In the case of foodstuffs **normally** sold by number, member states need not require indication of the net quantity provided that the number of items can be **clearly** seen and easily counted from the outside or, if not, is indicated on the labeling".

National traditions

The UK Federation of Bakers says selling baked goods by measuring and not number would **require** bakeries to spend large sums on new weighing equipment. It says customers understand that "no two rolls are the same".

But Ms Willmott said the draft did not explicitly rule out selling groceries by number, and added: "We fully expect the exemption to be in the final version".

A Danish MEP closely involved in the negotiations, Christel Schaldemose, also defended the current national exemptions. "We still have different cultures for food in Europe - we should **allow** member states to do something specific," she said. Labels showing both weight and number would be the best solution, she told the BBC.

Another "**problematic**" area is the definition of a "portion", she said. When Danish shoppers were asked to define a portion of cornflakes, she said, none of their guesses matched Kellogg's 30g portion.

"A portion needs to be scientifically based - there is a risk of misleading consumers," she said.

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1. Read the text and answer the questions

- a. What has prompted the hard work being put into standardising food labels within the EU?
- b. When is the final directive likely to be completed?
- c. Why might bakeries have to spend more money?
- d. What does The Grocer fear might become obsolete?
- e. Why is "a portion" likely to be problematical?
- f. Who is the UK Environment Secretary?

2. There are ten spelling mistakes. Please list the mistakes below

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3. Look at the words in the text that are in bold. They are listed on the left below. Now match them with a word on the right that can replace them in the text.

For example **backed** can be replaced by supported

| backed | → | supported |
|--------------------|---|------------|
| change | | let |
| currently | | alter |
| banned | | many |
| numerous | | presently |
| normally | | prohibited |
| clearly | | usually |
| require | | difficult |
| allow | | plainly |
| problematic | | need |

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4. What are your views? If we are part of the EU should we not follow their laws?

Write a several paragraphs in the space below, giving your views on the article.

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Answers

1.

- a. New draft legislation
- b. By the end of the year
- c. To buy new weighing equipment
- d. Promotions such as eight for the price of 6
- e. People do not agree on the size of a portion
- f. Caroline Spelman

2.

lables should be labels
legaslation should be legislation
alowed should be allowed
easily should be easily
cusermeters should be customers
labeling should be labelling
goverment should be government
promotional should be promotional
fully should be fully
parliament should be parliament

3.

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| backed | supported |
| change | alter |
| currently | presently |
| banned | prohibited |
| numerous | many |
| normally | usually |
| clearly | plainly |
| require | need |
| allow | let |
| problematic | difficult |