

Brussels, October 1961
P-6295INFORMATION MEMOCOLOURING MATTER IN FOOD PRODUCTS

The Commission of the European Economic Community has recently submitted to the Council of Ministers a draft directive on the approximation of Member States' rules on the use of colouring matter in food products intended for human consumption. This is the first proposal with a particular bearing on food products which has been made for approximation of those legislative and administrative provisions with a direct incidence on the establishment or functioning of the Common Market.

The directive will make possible the harmonisation of the various lists of colouring matters which the Member States allow to be used in food products. A definition of common standards of purity and a list of authorised thinners and solvents has been attached.

This draft does not cover the use of certain colouring matters which also have aromatic properties.

In drawing up this common list the experts of the Member States and the staff of the Commission have been guided by the desire to protect public health and by practical economic considerations.

Within one year of official receipt of the directive the Member States must bring their rules into line with this provision. For products on sale in the Community the new rules will be brought into force not later than two years after this notification. Products intended for export outside the Community are not affected.

An annex to the draft directive lists 28 substances and their derivatives which may be used either to colour the food product throughout or as surface colouring, and seven colouring matters which may be used for a specific purpose only (e.g. surface colouring). Another six colouring matters may be retained for a maximum period of three years; on the expiry of this time-limit their use will be prohibited, unless the Council decides to the contrary.

The conditions under which colouring matters may be used still have to be defined, i.e. the food products which may be coloured with one or more or all of the colouring matters included in the European list.

To make it possible to enforce these provisions certain information will have to be given on the packing of the authorised colouring matters. Member States will not be able to refuse entry if this information is given in two of the official languages of the Community, one of Germanic and one of Latin origin.

The Commission has consulted the Agricultural and Food Industries Committee of UNICE (Union of Industries of the European Community) and the International Secretariat of Trade Groups in the Chemical Industries of the EEC countries on this directive.