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** The 3 000 supporters of the European Movement who petitioned the EUROPEAN COUNCIL have every reason to be pleased with the outcome. Direct elections to the European Parliament are to be held on the same day throughout the Community in May or June 1978. If elections cannot be organized in Britain and Denmark on the agreed date for practical reasons, British and Danish

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The information published in this bulletin covers the European Communities' activities in the fields of industrial development, protection of the environment and consumer welfare. It is therefore not limited to recording Commission decisions or opinions.

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members will again be selected from among members of the two national parliaments. The European Commission considers that this major decision taken in Rome by the Heads of State and Government is of the utmost importance since it bears witness to a unanimous desire to forge ahead with the building of Europe. The same is true of the passport union. Now that the European Council has agreed to the introduction of a uniform passport from 1978 onwards, the Community's Foreign Ministers can concentrate on the abolition of border checks and the harmonization of national regulations on entry and residence. It was also agreed at the European Council that only the Community will be represented at the International Economic Cooperation Conference (better known as the "North-South dialogue") in Paris: the United Kingdom's bid for a separate seat, justified in British eyes by the potential importance of North Sea oil to Community supplies, has failed. It was agreed however that the head of the Community delegation would call on representatives of two Member States to make further comments in the light of their experience and in conformity with the Community mandate.

** Continuous consultation and a better balance between the interests of FARMERS and CONSUMERS: this sums up the main points made by a delegation from the Consumers' Consultative Committee when it met Mr Lardinois, Member of the European Commission with special responsibility for agriculture, on 4 December.

The text of the memorandum presented to Mr Lardinois on this occasion is reproduced in ANNEX 1. Mr Lardinois assured the delegation that the European Commission attached great importance to closer cooperation with consumers, notably in connection with the annual price review: consumers had as much if not more right to be heard than producers. Mr Lardinois promised to meet consumers' representatives again before the Community's farm prices are finally fixed in February.

** Twenty-three pilot schemes to COMBAT POVERTY are to be financed by the Community to the tune of 2.5 million units of account in 1975 and 2.8 million units of account in 1976 (1 u.a. = approx. US \$1.3).

Details are given in ANNEX 2.

** The days of juggling with packaging to find out what is inside are almost over. A new battle in the campaign for clear, readable and straightforward food labelling has been won. This time it is FRUIT JUICES which are the subject of a Community Directive.

ANNEX 3 outlines the problems and explains the solutions.

** By 1979 Europeans may well be driving on a COMMUNITY DRIVING LICENCE. This is one of the aims of a proposal recently presented by the European Commission to the Council of Ministers to harmonize legislation on vehicle driving licences. The proposal also provides for full reciprocal recognition of driving licences, uniform conditions for the issue of driving licences and uniform rules for dealing with traffic offences.

- ** At its recent plenary session the ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES gave its opinion on some twenty matters which had been referred to it. On the Lomé Convention the Committee stressed that development should be based on the autonomous growth of agricultural and industrial markets at local and regional level. It went on to declare its willingness to extend a warm welcome to all persons active in economic and social affairs in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries party to the Convention. On thermonuclear fusion the Committee felt that aid should be concentrated on a limited number of projects rather than dispersed over a wide range of activities. Hence its approval of aid to the "tokamak" or JET (Joint European Torus) project. On social security for migrant workers and their families, the Economic and Social Committee asked the European Commission to ensure that the new regulations are explained to the workers concerned and to the institutions responsible for applying them. The same concern to keep the public informed is reflected in the Committee's comments on the Community's environmental research and development programme. In its view the only way of ensuring that the Community's R&D funds are used to the best advantage is to invest an adequate sum in stepping up the flow of information to scientific circles, the press, the general public, and organizations and institutions interested in the adoption of environmental regulations. On taximeters the Committee felt that "since the main purpose of a taximeter is to calculate and display the sum owed by a passenger, drivers should not be allowed to demand more than the amount displayed". This comment obviously came from the heart: the Economic and Social Committee is based in Brussels and Brussels taxis are reputedly the most expensive in Europe!
- ** Consumers throughout the Community should have the same legal protection against MISLEADING ADVERTISING. This is why false or misleading advertising is listed as one of the priorities in the Community's consumer information and protection programme. A team of international experts has made a comparative study of unfair competition, including misleading advertising, for the European Commission. The findings are now being used by the Commission as a basis for a proposal for a Council directive which will establish principles for assessing the extent to which an advertisement is false, misleading or generally unfair; prevent consumers' or competing firms' interests from being harmed; and, where possible, protect particularly vulnerable groups.
- ** The Court of Justice of the European Communities recently confirmed that residence qualifications cannot interfere with the FREE PROVISION OF SERVICES. It was ruling in a case involving a Dutch insurance broker who, because he was resident in Belgium, had been struck off the list of brokers authorized to practice in the Netherlands by SER, the Dutch social and economic council. The Court held that it was incompatible with the provisions of the Treaty of Rome to require an individual to have a private residence in the country in which services are provided.
- ** The Chief Editor of the magazine "TEST" has sent us this report on the latest developments on the CONSUMER front in GERMANY:

- Legal expenses and lawyers' fees have just been increased by a new law which could mean that the cost of litigation involving sums of DM 6 000 and over will increase by more than 60%. This law is obviously not in the consumers' interest as it will make people think twice before taking legal action. Consumers' associations have voiced their displeasure.
 - A "Consumers' Week" is organized every two years in Germany. The fifth in the series was held at the end of October and was marked by a national demonstration in Bonn. In addition a number of regional surveys were conducted - on prices, on compliance with price display regulations and on the correct way to pour a glass of beer, all of them helping to promote consumer involvement. The Consumers' Working Group in Bonn organized a competition for the best consumer-oriented poster and screened the premiere of a film entitled "Look for the Bargains".
 - In "Consumers' Week" the German Government published its second report on consumer policy. This "white paper" published every four years lists consumer legislation adopted since 1971 and outlines proposals for future action. These include a revision of the small print on contracts, a review of drug legislation and a possible re-examination of the law on door-to-door sales. Consumers have also asked that much stricter guarantees be required of tour operators.
 - A well-known economic science institute has just produced a survey of pharmaceutical products on behalf of German Government. It emerges that prices could be reduced by 80% without affecting the industry's research and development effort. It has also been established that more is spent on promotion and publicity than on research and development. Over the last few years the increase in prices for pharmaceutical products has been higher than the average increase in consumer prices. So much so, in fact, that in 1974 expenditure by sickness insurance institutions on reimbursement of chemists' bills was 16.5% up on 1973 because of increased consumption and substantially higher prices.
- ** The International System of UNITS (SI for short) is revised at regular intervals: full use must be made of the resources offered by modern science and technology to define even the most basic units, such as the metre (re-defined in 1960) and the second (re-defined in 1967), as accurately as possible. It is also in the interests of the European Community to use units recognized by the rest of the world. Can a British engineer using the term "horse power" (which in Britain corresponds to 745.7 watts) be quite sure of being correctly understood on the continent (where it corresponds to 735.498 75 watts)? The European Commission has therefore proposed that Member States' legislation on units of measurement be gradually aligned. It will indeed be sad to see the stère (a cubic metre of wood) disappearing completely and the degree Celsius or Fahrenheit being replaced by the Kelvin. But the nostalgic amongst us should not despair. Harmonization admittedly makes for greater accuracy but there is no reason why we should not continue to use the

delightfully archaic and poetic calorie (now 4.186 8 joules) or furlong (now 201.2 metres) in everyday speech. And the essential has been preserved: the pint, kingpin of the British Imperial system, has been granted a reprieve.

- ** One particularly disturbing aspect of the current economic crisis is the cutback in training programmes which has led to a number of able but less qualified TRAINING OFFICERS being put out of work. The European Commission has therefore decided that the European Social Fund should part-finance a pilot scheme organized by the Training Services Agency in the United Kingdom to increase the skills and improve the professional qualifications of about thirty training officers.
- ** Member States may soon have the option of stamping a "European hallmark" on articles made of PLATINUM, GOLD AND SILVER or alloys of these metals. This is the essence of a proposal prepared by the European Commission which would protect Community consumers by guaranteeing the value of their purchases and benefit manufacturers by facilitating sales of their products. Forgers will forge at their own risk: a special secret mark which could only be detected by "authorized and informed persons" is to be incorporated in the Community hallmark.
- ** Cooperation between SWITZERLAND and the EUROPEAN COMMISSION in matters concerning the ENVIRONMENT is to be strengthened following an exchange of "letters of cooperation" between Mr Hans Hurlimann, Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Home Department, and Mr Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza, Vice-President of the European Commission. Exchange of information could cover methods for analysing and measuring certain air and water pollutants, the harmful effects of these pollutants, quality criteria and objectives, toxic waste, and the effects of energy production on the environment. Given Switzerland's key position in Europe, this cooperation will obviously prove valuable and could play an important part in solving problems associated with the pollution of the Rhine.
- ** The European Community has no specific policy for the clearance of DERELICT INDUSTRIAL AREAS but the European Commission is willing to do all it can to contribute towards the cost of reclamation and reindustrialization schemes. The European Regional Development Fund can help with the development of infrastructures and the establishment of new industries on cleared land. The resources of the European Investment Bank can also be used to finance industrial development. Another possibility, where land has become derelict as a result of the activities of the coal or steel industry, is a reconversion loan from the European Commission to stimulate industrial regrowth. In addition, the European Commission can - and already has - financed feasibility studies on the reconversion of disused coal or steel workings.
- ** You can read all about the COURT OF JUSTICE of the European Communities (composition, organization, powers and procedures) and the main aspects of Community case law in an interesting booklet recently published by the Publications Office of the European Communities, Boite postale 1003, Luxembourg.

THE CONSUMER'S VIEW OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY

The text of the memorandum presented by the Consumers' Consultative Committee is reproduced below. The sub-titles are the editor's.

The Community has accepted a far-reaching obligation to safeguard the interests of consumers: our objective is to highlight those aspects of community policy in the area of food and agriculture, where we feel that the consumer interest is at present being ignored, and to make suggestions of a constructive nature on the improvement of such policies. We recognize the complexities, both political and administrative, of devising satisfactory policies in the economic and social field, but we feel strongly that, unless consumers within the Community are themselves satisfied that the Community is acting in their interests, support for the existence of the European Community itself is at risk.

The consumer's interest

The consumer has two basic interests in the operation of the market for agricultural goods within Europe. The first is to be assured of a stable food supply. This is already acknowledged within the Treaty, and one of the aims of the Common Agricultural Policy is to ensure adequate supplies of foodstuffs at reasonable prices to Community consumers. The European Commission has consistently reaffirmed this obligation, but we feel that the development of the CAP fails in certain respects to honour this commitment. Our comments are designed to assist in this complex area of policy making, so that consumer organizations can reassure the interests that they represent of the progress being made toward these objectives.

The second interest is to ensure that the products from European farms are produced, marketed, processed and distributed in a way which gives maximum benefit to the European consumer. This interest requires that the Community continue to develop policies and legislation regarding structural improvement in agriculture and the food industry and the maintenance of adequate competition. But one aspect is of particular relevance to the operation of the CAP : we feel that consumers should not be made to pay higher prices for European farm products than those which are charged to consumers overseas. This principle, which we think of as "Community consumer preference", is an essential part of the process of reassurance of the consumer that the CAP is in his interests.

The pressure on prices

The agricultural policy of the Community has a major influence on the conditions of food supply. It affects both the price of domestic foodstuffs and their availability, and it influences the level and cost of imported produce. The consumer does not in general have a preference for food products from one source rather than another, provided that they are of comparable quality, or that different qualities are adequately reflected in prices. It follows that when the CAP raises the cost to the consumer of products from any source it

will tend to act against their best interest. In the past, the CAP has increased the price of imported food through the operation of levies, which has resulted also in higher prices for European farm production. In addition the subsidization of exports has also led to higher domestic prices for European consumers.

Such protection is often defended on the grounds that in the long run consumers will benefit from a higher level of European farm output : the onus is on those who make this claim to demonstrate to consumers that an implicit tax on their food purchases is in their own interest.

These price increases for consumers have wider implications than just to reduce the level of income available to be spent on other products. First and foremost, the hardest hit are those families who have to spend a relatively large proportion of their income on food products. But in addition, higher food costs have an undesirable effect on wage costs and inflation which in turn leads to demands for higher farm prices by farmers concerned about their living standards. The implications of higher costs for the competitiveness of European industry, especially at a time of serious unemployment and world recession, are unacceptable to European consumers as a whole, and we believe detrimental to the process of European integration.

Other aspects of agricultural policy have had a positive effect on consumers : in particular the control of exports in times of very high world prices, the improvement of efficiency in both the production and marketing of farm goods, and the conclusion of contracts with overseas suppliers when the reliability of such supplies might otherwise be in doubt. It is our aim to reinforce the positive influences of the agricultural policy on the conditions of food supply and to contain the negative elements which conflict with consumer interests. This means that consumers must be assured that the Community is prepared to use the instruments at its disposal to safeguard food supplies at a reasonable cost. If consumers were told explicitly on what assumptions the European Commission was basing its policy towards European producers - the expected availability and price of supplies from each source - they would be in a better position to appreciate the positive aspects of the food supply policy and be more tolerant of the difficulties that inevitably arise in democratic policy making.

Areas of consumer concern

To this end we wish to make the following points which arise from an ongoing attempt by the Consumers' Consultative Committee to monitor developments in the CAP and to coordinate consumers' views. They do not of course exhaust our interest in the policy or in the influence of other Community programmes on food supply. Nor do they constitute proposals for changes in policy - these can only come after detailed discussion and consultation. But they do constitute matters of prime concern to us : if accommodation cannot be found on these matters then we have to conclude that the CAP is inherently in opposition to consumer interests.

We feel strongly that the continuation of the practice of subsidizing exports of European farm goods is incompatible with the interests of Community consumers. Such subsidies when linked to clearly defined overseas aid policies we would accept as helping consumers in other countries less fortunate than ourselves. But in general we would like to see a commitment to what we referred to above as the "principle of Community consumer preference" whereby consumers in other countries would not be sold European produce at a price below that which is paid by housewives in Member States. We realize that export subsidies have proved a convenient way of disposing of "surplus" products, but we cannot accept either the inevitability of such surpluses or the use of this method in their disposal.

The problem of storage

Linked with the problem of surpluses in the Community is the mechanism of intervention buying. In our view some storage may be desirable from a consumers' viewpoint both in situations where production varies cyclically relative to demand, as with beef, pigmeat and poultry products, and where output is inherently unreliable from year to year. The main insurance the consumer has against fluctuations in domestic farm output is the possibility of international trade, but the existence of such trade will also tend to transmit price instability from abroad when the production fluctuations are worldwide. The consumer realizes that in some years wheat, sugar or beef may be scarce, and is prepared to pay a small premium to those who store products and help to even out supply. To a large extent this is performed by the food trade itself, but we recognize the need on occasions for assistance at Community level. But this is not our interpretation of the functioning of the present system of intervention at a predetermined price level. We would like to see limited intervention where it can be defended on the grounds of expectations of future supplies, with the basis for these expectations themselves made explicit.

The heart of the problem of surpluses and their disposal is the price level set by the Community each year for farm products. It is implicit in the previous argument that consumers are willing to pay a price which corresponds to that dictated by the availability of goods from all sources of supply, including a reasonable margin for processing and distribution and for such storage as is necessary. This may not cover the costs of all farmers in the Community, even some of those employing technically sophisticated methods. It is no easy task to identify a group of farms on whose costs one can calculate proposals for future prices. Farms that are efficient in supplying the needs of consumers will be those that find the price paid willingly by consumers to be adequate to keep them in business. This does not mean that consumers, any more than producers, have blind faith in the ability of a free market to ensure stable and inexpensive food supplies. The consumer interest is in making sure that the price policies of the Community do not act in a way which distorts the incentive to produce in an indefensible way. A price policy is acceptable when it improves the functioning of the market : only if it performs less adequately than an unregulated market will pressure build up for a replacement of the price policy itself. We do not neglect the problem of social justice in a humane Community that is faced by many inefficient farms, but we do not believe it to be in the long term interest

of the Community to finance the necessary social programmes by means of a consumer food tax.

The consumer is also a taxpayer

The problem of budget cost is also of interest to consumers, both on account of the impact of direct taxation on funds available for consumer spending and of the influence of indirect taxation on the price of goods in the shops. Some of the changes which we would suggest in the CAP would increase the budget cost : a lower level of import levies, for instance, would necessitate the raising of budget income in other ways, and if non-price measures were found to be necessary to attain social objectives this would also prove an additional burden on taxpayers. But other changes would reduce the cost : a reduction in export subsidies and in the cost of intervention buying would reduce the burden on both taxpayers and consumers. The Community consumer, like the Community taxpayer, acknowledges that policies involve finance, but if the purpose of the policy is accepted, there will be less resentment of the cost.

The need for an open debate

We have stated the consumer view in a somewhat unequivocal manner because we believe that such problems must be the subject of open debate at all stages of policy formulation and decision making. There are of course many other matters, such as the quality of foodstuffs, the unity of market prices, the role of the Community in wider matters of world food supply, and the efficiency of farm product marketing and processing. If all these topics are to be fairly discussed, it is essential that the Consumers' Consultative Committee should have access to information of interest to the consumer and that the Committee itself should be heard at an early stage in the development of policies. Consumers should also be closely involved in the committees that have consultative and administrative responsibilities for the operation of the agricultural policy. We would like to have an opportunity of elaborating on these proposals in the near future.

COMBATING POVERTY IN THE COMMUNITY

Twenty-three pilot schemes to combat poverty - two of them transnational - are to be financed by the Community to the tune of 2.5 million units of account in 1975 and 2.8 million units of account in 1976 (1 u.a. = approx. US \$1.3). When it approved this decision the European Commission recognized that a programme of this kind would obviously not be enough to wipe out poverty but felt that it could help to shed some light on a complex problem and pioneer new techniques for dealing with it. The schemes approved are outlined below.

Belgium

About 15 000 people live in the 50-hectare Marolles district of Brussels, a high proportion of them on or below the poverty line. The Marolles General Action Committee has undertaken to combat poverty there by forming or strengthening action groups on housing, amenities and culture.

The Community will provide Bfrs 5.7 million in 1975 and Bfrs 6.5 million in 1976.

Denmark

The twin aims of the scheme sponsored by the Kofoeds School are to identify the categories of people in need not caught by Danish social security net and to establish why this should be. The programme will also attempt to provide aid where necessary.

The Community will contribute Dkr 245 000 in 1975.

France

1. COPES, the national centre for psychological and social adjustment, will coordinate action to assist socially handicapped families in the Paris area by keeping young children in their original environment.
2. The national federation of PACT centres runs various schemes to improve housing conditions for the poorest sections of the community. The schemes which are to receive Community aid cover urban and rural areas.
3. Aide à Toute Détresse (ATD), the movement for aid to those in need, has been asked to operate a pilot scheme in a medium-sized town, the aim being to integrate the most deprived members of society into the normal life of the town.
4. The ATD is also running a pilot scheme for poor families; it affects 1 240 people in three districts. The aim is to help these families provide their children with the basis necessary for satisfactory progress at school.

The Community's contribution to these French schemes will be FF 2.6 million in 1975 and FF 3 million in 1976.

Germany

1. The institute for social research and social policy in Köln is organizing a survey to find ways and means of making the city's social welfare system more efficient.
2. The association for welfare housing and the institute of psychology of Tübingen University are cooperating on a research project aimed at extending welfare arrangements for persons of no fixed abode to remedial and preventive measures and making the existing rehabilitation programme as efficient as possible.
3. Two social welfare associations in Essen and Duisburg (the Ruhr) are cooperating on a joint project to help the homeless in these areas.

The Community's total contribution to these three projects will be DM 0.9 million in 1975 and DM 1 million in 1976.

Ireland

The Irish national committee on pilot schemes to combat poverty is sponsoring three schemes:

1. Four community research projects in deprived rural and urban areas with a view to identifying the problems and organizing suitable action in conjunction with the local authorities.
2. A welfare rights project to examine ways of ensuring that people receive the benefits and allowances to which they are entitled.
3. An assessment of the new supplementary benefits scheme and ways in which it might be further improved.

The Community will provide a total of £108 630 in 1975 and £124 915 in 1976.

Italy

The municipal authorities of Padua, under the technical supervision of the Administration for Italian and International Aid, are to investigate ways of helping the poor of the region through the integrated social and health service known as the "Local Unit".

The Community's contribution will be Lit 400 million in 1975 and Lit 460 million in 1976.

Luxembourg

The Ministry for Family Affairs and Social Integration has entrusted two projects to the research department of the Walferdange Institut pédagogique. The first will identify the country's most underprivileged families and suggest ways of helping them under a comprehensive social policy. The second will endeavour to detect chronic poverty through existing educational facilities and devise special programmes to assist underprivileged children. The two projects are obviously complementary.

The Community will provide Lfrs 3.1 million in 1975 and Lfrs 3.6 million in 1976.

Netherlands

The Dutch branch of the ATD is working on a project to form a group of Breda families into a community, special attention being focused on the poorest members of the group. The aim is to demonstrate that a team of social and cultural workers sharing the living conditions of these families and employing new community development techniques can reintegrate these families and enable them to play a full part in modern society.

The Community's contribution will be Fl 120 065 in 1975 and Fl 130 675 in 1976.

United Kingdom

1. A group of voluntary organizations from various parts of the country are to collaborate on a family day centre project which will experiment with different approaches to the task of helping the very poor to cope with deprivation. The organizations concerned are: London Council of Social Service; Gingerbread, Croydon; ATD; Defoe Day Care Project Committee; Cambridge House and Talbot; Camden Family Service Unit; Liverpool Personal Service Society.
2. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon) has an area resource centre in the United Kingdom which concentrates on the problems of a major city with areas of deprivation. The centre will help social workers and local action groups by providing technical aid, equipment and advice.
3. Two projects are being organized in the Edinburgh area by the Craigmillar Festival Society and the Lothian Regional Council. The Craigmillar project is an attempt by the inhabitants of this poor area to tackle and solve their own material and social problems. The Lothian project will attempt to combat poverty in the areas of Edinburgh where it is most acute.
4. The National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux is planning to broaden its services by giving advice and information on right of appeal to social security tribunals and organizing lay advocates to help citizens appearing before these tribunals.

5. The Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services is planning two surveys: the first will determine the extent to which governmental and other services are used in the fields of housing, health and education; the second will examine the role played by voluntary organizations in meeting social needs.

The Community's total contribution to these projects will be £192 500 in 1975 and £229 000 in 1976.

Transnational projects

1. Three institutes - the Institute of Community Studies in London, INSES (Institut für Angewandte Sozialwissenschaft) in Bonn-Bad Godesberg, and CREDOC (Centre de recherche et de documentation sur la consommation) in Paris - are to combine forces on the first phase of a comparative transnational survey of poverty in Britain, France and Germany to determine the composition of poverty groups and shed light on the operation of the social services. No Community funds will be made available for the second phase of the survey unless the validity of this approach is proven by the findings of the first.

2. The European Commission is organizing a survey on the "face of poverty" throughout the Community. For this purpose an extra questionnaire will be included in the survey organized by the European Commission at regular intervals among consumers in 5 000 households in each Member State to ascertain their views on the current economic situation.

A total of 160 000 units of account will be spent on these two studies in 1975.

WHEN IS FRUIT JUICE FRUIT JUICE?

The days of juggling with packaging to find out what is inside are almost over. A new battle in the campaign for clear, readable and straightforward food labelling has been won. A recent Directive on fruit juices and similar products adopted by the European Community's Council of Ministers is of interest to producers and consumers alike since it forms part of the programme to eliminate technical barriers to trade in foodstuffs.

A good example of a "technical barrier"

There are several barriers to trade in fruit juices, affecting processing, composition and labelling. The Member States consume vast quantities of fruit juices and have to import, mainly from the US, the Middle East and Southern Africa, to satisfy demand. Because of the distances to be covered products are compressed to reduce transport costs.

Fruit juices are therefore concentrated in the exporting country and are normally shipped as deep-frozen blocks. This is where the first "barriers" arise.

It is obvious that deep-frozen juice cannot be sold as such; it must be reconstituted to restore its original consistency, appearance and taste. Before it reaches the consumer it must be subjected to a process which replaces the water and flavour extracted when the juice was concentrated. But this process is not recognized by all Member States.

The Community's answer

Generally speaking it can be said that, if a number of more or less similar products are to be found in the Community, the Commission's policy is to recognize all of them in a Council directive - providing of course there are no opposing health reasons. At the same time however strict labelling rules are imposed so that products are clearly identified when they reach the shops.

This applies to processing techniques and to composition.

Thus the Directive adopted by the Council of Ministers on 17 November authorizes the reconstitution of concentrated fruit juices but stipulates that the description on the label must indicate that the package contains fruit juice "made from concentrate".

The same applies to the addition of sugar though here consumer preference varies. The Northern consumer likes sweet juice, the Southern consumer prefers the "undoctored" product. If sugar is added the Southerner will say that it is no longer fruit juice; the Northerner on the other hand will maintain that it is still juice and that if sugar were not added fewer people would drink it.

The Council has settled the question. In the interests of free movement these products must be recognized for what they are, which is why a new category - "sweetened fruit juices" - was introduced. These products can now be labelled "juices" (this used not to be allowed in some countries) but this description must be qualified by "reconstituted", "made from concentrate" and/or "sweetened". In the case of sweetened juice the quantity of sugar added must be specified if it exceeds 15 g per litre.

These provisions also apply to nectar, a product which contains no additives. Nectar is a mixture of fruit juice, sugar and water, although sometimes fruit purée is used instead of juice. The Council Directive recognizes nectar but once again insists that the juice and fruit content be clearly indicated.

To sum up then all products must be labelled with all the necessary information so that free movement does not prejudice the interests of manufacturers or consumers.

Drink in safety

The Council also felt that substances used in processing should be listed so that the composition of juice offered to the consumer could not be tampered with.

Is processing necessary?

Yes, because juice deteriorates very quickly and quality must be maintained throughout the year. The manufacturing season is very short so manufacturers are forced to use "preserving agents". These preserve the juice in good condition but are not present when the juice is sold. All but two of these agents disappear.

The first is L-ascorbic acid which is present as vitamin C in the natural juice. This is added to prevent juice turning brown when exposed to the air. It merely reinforces the natural ascorbic acid content, which is why a manufacturer cannot put "added vitamins" on the label since this could mislead the consumer.

The second is carbon dioxide which is sometimes added to juice to make it slightly fizzy and, to some people's taste, more refreshing. It is present in small quantities only and does not affect quality.

Exceptions for grape juice

Manufacturers use sulphur dioxide to prevent grape juice from fermenting. As this agent is not quite as innocuous as the others, the Council decided to limit the permissible level of sulphur dioxide in the final product to 10 mg per litre.

This breaks new ground: some countries used to allow 100 mg or more of sulphur dioxide per litre of grape juice. This is not dangerous for an adult but it could harm a child,

especially since so many mothers believe that fruit juice is good for children.

The Council of Ministers has given manufacturers four years' grace to find an alternative method of dealing with grape juice. It is to be hoped that they will act immediately rather than wait until the end of this period to remedy the situation.