



Health & Consumer Voice

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Headline News

Temporary suspension of animal cloning for food production _____ 1

13th European Health Forum _____ 1-2

Top Stories

4th Consumer Markets Scoreboard _____ 2-3

European Consumer Centres: five years at the service of consumers _____ 3

Animal by-products: new rules to simplify controls and reduce costs _____ 4

Open Forum on Alcohol and Health _____ 4

In brief

Revision of the Tobacco Products Directive _____ 2

High-level conference on Behavioural Economics _____ 3

Commissioner Dalli's intervention at Shanghai Expo _____ 4

Temporary suspension of animal cloning for food production

Based on a report, published on 19 October, the European Commission has announced that it will propose a temporary suspension of animal cloning for food production in the EU. The Commission also plans to suspend temporarily the use of cloned farm animals and the marketing of food from clones. All temporary measures will be reviewed after five years.

Cloning is the creation of an organism that is a genetic copy of another, meaning that the two organisms share exactly the same DNA.

The debate about cloning for food purposes started a few years ago when cloned embryos were imported into the EU. According to the current EU Regulation, food produced from clones is considered "novel food" as it is not produced via traditional breeding techniques, and therefore falls under the scope of the Regulation on Novel foods, which is now under discussion at EU level.

The adopted communication is a response to calls from the European Parliament and Member States to launch a specific EU policy on this sensitive issue. The communication presents an assessment of cloning technology in relation to food



production and examines the relevant aspects of cloning in light of the existing legislative framework. It acknowledges the challenges posed by animal welfare issues and takes into consideration the ethical facet of cloning. It also notes that there is no scientific evidence confirming food safety concerns regarding foods obtained from cloned animals or their offspring.

In the Commission's view, a selective mixture of measures, accompanied by a review clause after five years, is the best way forward to address the issue. These measures will sufficiently address animal welfare concerns without introducing unnecessary and unjustifiable restrictions. The proposal will not suspend cloning for uses other than food, such as research, conservation of endangered species or use of animals for the production of pharmaceuticals.

For further information, please see:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1349&format=HTML&aged=0&language=FR&guiLanguage=fr>

13th European Health Forum

"Health in Europe – Ready for the Future" was the overall theme of the 13th European Health Forum, which took place on 6-9 October in Bad Hofgastein.

Commissioner Dalli delivered the keynote address at his very first "Gastein Conference" as European Commissioner for Health and



In brief



Revision of the Tobacco Products Directive

On 27 September the European Commission launched a public consultation on the revision of the Tobacco Products Directive (2001/37/EC). A wide range of views is sought on factors such as labelling and health warnings on tobacco packets and additives used as tobacco ingredients.

The Tobacco Products Directive stipulates maximum limits in cigarettes for substances such as nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide. It also requires manufacturers to put textual health warnings on tobacco products and ban terms such as "light", "mild" or "low tar".

The Directive dates from 2001 and international and scientific developments, as well as the good functioning of the internal market, require reflecting whether the Directive still fully responds to the challenges and ensures a high level of health protection.

This consultation is based on a broad spectrum of options based on the existing knowledge base. Several options imply that measures at the EU level can be either binding or non-binding. Any implications relating to the EU competence or to the functioning of internal market will be taken into account when analysing which particular combination of options is going to be proposed.

The consultation aims at offering an early possibility for the public to comment on the need to revise the Directive and on different policy options that such revision might involve.

EU citizens, economic operators, non governmental organisations and relevant national authorities are welcome to participate in the consultation. All interested parties are invited to submit their comments by 17 December 2010.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/consultations/tobacco_cons_01_en.htm



Consumer Policy and participated in a panel discussion on how prepared policy makers are for future challenges. His speech focussed largely on the budgetary and demographic challenges that lie ahead and on the role prevention and finding innovative solutions could play in addressing them.

In this vein, he said, "investing in prevention builds a reserve for the future. Like a solid long-term financial investment, it bears fruit when it reaches maturity".

During the Opening Session of the conference with the Austrian Health Minister, Paola Testori Coggi, Director-General of DG Health and Consumers, spoke on behalf of the



In the picture: the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy John Dalli



In the picture: the participants in the forum "EU action and local partnerships for health", including MEP Antonia Parvanova (3rd from the left) and Paola Testori Coggi (5th from the left)

European Commission. She also chaired a parallel forum on EU action and partnerships for health co-organised by DG Health & Consumers and DG Research and opened an exhibition aimed at promoting successful projects funded by EU health and research programmes.

Gastein has become one of the most important European gatherings on issues of public health and health policy. This year, it welcomed around 600 participants from a number of backgrounds – from politics, health care providers and industry, to NGOs and academia.

For further information, please see:

<http://www.ehfg.org/index.php>

4th Consumer Markets Scoreboard

The Consumer Markets Scoreboard is a tool put in place to make sure that the EU single market is working for European consumers, offering them a greater choice of products and services, competitive prices, effective complaints handling and ensuring that they are supported by effective national consumer institutions.

From 2010 the Scoreboard is published twice per year. The spring edition examines progress in the integration of the EU retail market from the consumers' perspective and monitors improvements in national conditions for consumers. The autumn edition (published now as the 4th Scoreboard edition) screens 50 consumer markets in all EU countries (as well as Norway), which, for the first time, cover over

60% of the consumer budget. The Consumer Markets Scoreboard is based on a large market-monitoring survey measuring the reported experienced and opinions of consumers with recent purchasing experience in each market.

The purpose of the Scoreboard is to identify markets which may be underperforming for consumers. This provides crucial evidence for policy follow-up, and feeds into the European Commission's broader work monitoring the functioning of the Single Market.

Key findings from the Scoreboard

- Three services markets consistently have the lowest scores regardless of whether the size of EU countries

is taken into account or not. These are: investments, pensions and securities, real estate services, and internet service provision.

- The three worst-performing goods markets are: second-hand cars, clothing and footwear, and meat.
- Books, magazines and newspapers as well as cultural and entertainment services are among the top rated markets.
- Consumers place airlines in the upper half of the ranking, above all other transport services and especially during a very difficult time for the industry.

European Consumer Centres: five years at the service of consumers

ECC-Net is a network financed by the European Commission and Member States which offers consumers free legal advice and assistance in every EU country as well as Norway and Iceland. Between 2005 and 2009, the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net) handled almost 270.000 contacts with EU consumers who turned to them for advice or help on cross-border shopping.

According to the ECC-Net 5th anniversary report published by the European Commission and presented in Brussels on 12 October, the number of annual contacts has been rising steadily, from about 43.000 in 2005 to over 60.000 in 2009.

ECC 5-Year Report (2005-2009): main findings

- In 2009, more than half (55.9%) of all complaints received by ECCs concerned online transactions. The remaining contacts were for information and advice.
- The sectors which ECC clients complained about most were: transport (30.6% of complaints

In the light of these findings, the European Commission will launch two follow-up market studies to investigate in-depth the reasons behind the findings and to identify possible policy remedies. The markets concerned will be:

- Internet service provision, which is the market where prices diverge widely across the EU.
- Meat, which is one of the goods markets with the lowest ranking.

The full text of the Scoreboard Report is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/facts_en.htm#4CMS

in 2009), recreation and culture (26.2%) as well as restaurants and accommodation (13.3%).

- Among the complaints on transport services, 75.6% concerned air transport, e.g. refunds and compensations for cancelled flights or lost luggage.

Help us promote European Consumer Centres and win a summit trip

If you have ever used the services of a European Consumer Centre (ECC), take a few minutes to fill in a short survey and get a chance to win a trip to the European Consumer Summit in March 2011. The survey is part of the research which will help the European Commission to get better at informing EU consumers about the services which European Consumer Centres (ECC-Net) can provide for them. The survey is available in 22 European languages.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/ecc/index_en.htm

To fill in the survey, please go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=ecc&lang=en>

In brief



High-level conference on Behavioural Economics

On 22 November the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers will be hosting in the Albert Borschette Centre, Brussels a high-level conference titled: "Behavioural Economics, so what: Should Policy-Makers Care?"

The conference should attract a wide audience from the national and international policy-making, research, NGOs and business communities.

The aim of the conference is to understand how behavioural economics could be used to influence public policy and regulatory design across the European Commission, in a way that benefits EU consumers and citizens.

Behavioural economics is a sub-branch of economics focusing on how people make choices, drawing insights from both psychology and economics. It develops more realistic assumptions, produces better simulations of the real world functioning and, eventually, delivers more useful predictions.

Behavioural economics analyses individual's decision-making processes using replicable laboratory and field experiments, attempting to fill the gap between standard economic theories and the real economy.

The conference is the second of the series of Behavioural Economics events, whose first one took place in 2008 and attracted a wide audience.

This conference will also be an opportunity to present the results of the joint pilot behavioural study on retail investment services, led by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services and Directorate-General for Health and Consumers.

In addition, the conference will be an opportunity to review and discuss how the behavioural approach is being used by other national and international institutions (including the UK Office of Fair Trading and the US Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs), to gather useful evidence to inform policy-making.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/conferences/behavioural_economics2/index_en.htm

Animal by-products: new rules to simplify controls and reduce costs

A new set of implementing rules on animal by-products were endorsed on 12 October by the Member States in the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoCAH). Those measures are expected to simplify controls, reduce the administrative burden and cut the costs for operators, while maintaining the existing high levels of human and animal health protection.

Animal by-products are materials of animal origin not consumed by humans, such as animal fats and milk powder used for feeding farmed animals, hides and skins for leather production and blood used for diagnostic tools.

With Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009, the Council and the European Parliament set out how animal by-products are categorised, according to the health risks which they pose. The Regulation determines how animal by-products should be collected, transported, processed, used or disposed of.

The new rules, which will apply as from 4 March 2011, will exempt from controls packaged pet-food, biodiesel, tanned hides and skins and some other products from veterinary controls, since potential

health risks from those products are mitigated by appropriate treatments. This will result in a reduction of costs for operators who are handling or selling such products. The new rules will also reduce considerably the administrative burden for the use of animal by-products in medicines and diagnostic tools. That should allow focusing on major health risks, while maintaining the current high level of protection of public and animal health.

The new rules allow for the import of any category of animal by-products for research and development, and will also facilitate the feeding of animal by-products to protected species. This should help the protected species reconcile their natural feeding patterns with the objective to prevent the spreading of diseases, thus strengthening biodiversity in the EU.

The technical details are left to the European Commission's implementing measures, which have been endorsed by the Member States and have been prepared in close contact with all interested parties and the European Parliament.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/animalby-products/index_en.htm

Open Forum on Alcohol and Health

Within the framework of the European Alcohol and Health Forum (EAHF), a Third Open Forum will be held in Brussels on 19 November.

The Open Forum is an opportunity for exchange of information and discussion with a wider range of interested parties than the EAHF membership, providing networking possibilities among stakeholders who wish to contribute to the reduction of alcohol-related harm.

The Third Open Forum presents the European Alcohol and Health Forum's work, and provides an update of policy developments in the Europe and internationally. Topics for debate will be the Social Cost of Alcohol, Information to Consumers and Responsible Selling and Serving.

For further information, please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/events/open220410_en.htm

In brief



Commissioner Dalli's intervention at Shanghai Expo

On 26 October the European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy John Dalli took part with a keynote speech in the conference "How best to ensure safe purchases for consumers - The EU experience", focusing on modern consumer policy and guarantees of product safety in Europe and hosted by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers.

High-level representatives from the institutions, consumer and other non-governmental organisations and the European business sector presented their complementary perspectives and contributions in today's global market context.

The importance of close cooperation between the EU and China was illustrated, and the Chinese and European participants had an opportunity to look at achievements, exchange experiences and share success stories. Shopping for goods and services is a part of daily life, and the EU has a well-developed legal framework to ensure that products in Europe are safe and that consumers are properly informed and empowered to make good choices.

This helped participants move towards new perspectives and new opportunities to work together to build "Better Cities, Better Lives", which has been the leading theme of the Shanghai World Exposition, closed on 31 October.

For further information, please see:

<http://healthconsumeratshanghai.eu/events/better-consumers-rights-better-life>



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