



## The European Vegetarian Union (EVU)

### The need for a legal definition of 'Vegetarian' & 'Vegan'

#### EVU Position Paper on the draft Regulation on food information to consumers

17 February 2010

The European Vegetarian Union (EVU) welcomes the aim of the Commission's proposal to form a clear framework and a common basis governing food information that will:

- Ensure that consumers are appropriately informed as regard food they consume;
- Make it easier for consumers to make informed food choices that respect their health, economic, environmental, social, ethical and religious considerations;
- Prohibit the use of food information that would mislead the consumer.

However, the EVU is greatly concerned that the above principles are entirely disregarded across the EU in relation to the use of the terms 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' on food:

- Currently, the terms 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' are not defined or legally protected in the EU.
- As a result, food producers in the EU can mark their products as 'vegetarian' or 'vegan', even if these products are, or are made from or with the aid of products derived from animals that have died, have been slaughtered, or animals that die as a result of being eaten.
- Vegetarians and vegans are therefore forced to place their trust in unregulated logos based on different criteria which are applied inconsistently – and sometimes fraudulently – across Europe.

This is particularly problematic as consumers are not in a position to identify possible abuses of the terms 'vegetarian' or 'vegan' from the ingredients lists: labels do not include processing aids such as gelatine (boiled bones and skin), animal rennet used to set hard cheeses, or information about possible cross-contamination when vegetarian foods are cooked or processed alongside meat. Furthermore, 51 different e-numbered additives can sometimes be suitable for vegetarians and sometimes not – depending on the way they have been produced.

In order to address this situation and ensure that consumers who want to purchase 'vegetarian' or 'vegan' food are not misled across the EU, the EVU is calling for the inclusion of a legal definition of the terms 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' in the draft Regulation on food information to consumers along the lines suggested by the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA).

**The EVU calls on you to support Amendment 496 by Carl Schlyter MEP which will provide a legal definition of the voluntary labels 'vegetarian' and 'vegan' across the EU:**

**Article 35 – paragraph 6 a (new)**

*6a. The term 'vegetarian' should not be applied to foods that are, or are made from or with the aid of products derived from animals that have died, have been slaughtered, or animals that die as a result of being eaten. The term 'vegan' should not be applied to foods that are, or are made from or with the aid of animals or animal products (including products from living animals).*





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### About the European Vegetarian Union (EVU):

Founded in 1985, the EVU is the umbrella organisation for vegetarian societies and groups in Europe. It represents 45 vegetarian societies from over 30 European countries, thus representing more than 25 million vegetarians. For more information, please visit our website at: [www.euroveg.eu](http://www.euroveg.eu)

### For further information, please contact:

Sebastian Zösch

Tel: +49 (0)30-74928164

Mobile: +49 (0)179-7789902

[Sebastian.Zoesch@euroveg.eu](mailto:Sebastian.Zoesch@euroveg.eu)

