
Request for advice

On 18 August 1999 the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport wrote as follows to the Chair of the Health Council (letter ref. GZB/VVB 993428):

European Union Regulation (EC) 258/97 on novel foods and novel food ingredients has been in force since May 1997, making safety assessment part of a Community procedure.

The possibility of having the assessment carried out by the Health Council has already been discussed with you, and I would therefore ask you, also on behalf of the State Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, to organise the safety assessment for a number of years during this initial phase of the implementation of European Regulation (EC) 258/97. Assigning this task to the Health Council makes sense in view of the experimental nature of the assessment in the first few years, as this is a new kind of assessment, including some new categories of foods and food ingredients: namely a pre-launch safety assessment of foods of genetically modified origin and 'functional foods' (nutriceuticals) in particular. I also trust that the independent scientific advice from the Health Council will further strengthen confidence in the Dutch opinion on the part of the European Commission and the other Member States.

My policy is to achieve the greatest possible openness and transparency in the procedure adopted and the assessment, so as to give consumers confidence in the safety of the novel foods. I would ask the Health Council to contribute to this, e.g. by allowing access to the dossiers for which applications are filed, while of course protecting confidential company data, and publishing the criteria used to assess safety.

Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport

(signed)

Dr. E. Borst-Eilers