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**Article**

## Food safety through more regulation? (Pro and contra) ; pro - food legislation must be effective and efficient

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# FOOD SAFETY THROUGH MORE REGULATION?

## PRO: FOOD LEGISLATION MUST BE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT

DAVID BYRNE\*

To me, the fundamental question is not “Do we need more or less legislation?” The key question should be “Does it work?” The challenge is to put in place legislation that does the job effectively and efficiently.

The European Commission has publicly stated its commitment “to ensure that European consumers have access to the safest possible food supply in the world”. This is a firm statement of intent – a top priority. To achieve this, a framework of appropriate regulation and control is of paramount importance. We simply cannot hope to achieve our aims without it.

Consumer confidence and the confidence of our trading partners are vital to the success of the European food industry both within the internal market and in the global market place. A safe European food chain from farm to fork, correctly regulated and effectively controlled, is the way forward towards building and maintaining confidence in our food supply to the benefit of *all* our stakeholders: producers, processors, retailers, exporters and, most importantly, consumers.

A White Paper on Food Safety was adopted just over two years ago and since then a significant number of positive steps has been taken. A key step was the adoption of a Regulation that lays down the general principles and requirements of food law, procedures in matters of food safety and

the establishment of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). This is a great leap forward – the cornerstone of our strategy.

The system for the development of food law, both scientific advice and the procedures for developing legislative proposals, must be as transparent as possible. We need to promote an open-minded dialogue and be able to demonstrate visible balance between all stakeholders to ensure maximum transparency of information on which proposals for food safety legislation will be based.

The EFSA will provide this transparency. Its independent scientific advice will provide the basis on which the Commission will take risk management decisions. The EFSA will be an authoritative body of expertise covering all scientific matters, which may have a direct or indirect effect on the safety of the food supply, from primary production and animal feed through to the supply of food to consumers.

We will propose legislation where it is prudent and necessary to do so. But I would stress that I have no desire to burden the food industry with regulation upon regulation, or to propose legislation for legislation’s sake. Nor do I have any wish to stifle innovation. I have also placed particular emphasis on the need to ensure that there are sufficient safeguards to facilitate the continued existence of the wide range of smaller, traditional food production processes and businesses within the European Union.

My aim is simply to create a modern and flexible system, with effective and open organisational structures, capable of regulating and controlling a highly complex, highly diverse and in many cases highly technologically advanced food industry, with the aim of guaranteeing the maintenance of basic high standards. To promote quality, choice and diversity, underpinned by relevant and effective safeguards.



\* European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection.

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