

The use of fermented vegetable broth, enriched with nitrite

Discussed at the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on 19th May 2010

The Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health endorsed, in its meeting of 14 December 2006, the outcome of the additive working group that the use of a spinach extract containing high levels of nitrate in sausages with an intended technological purpose of preservation is a deliberate use of a food additive. Such a use of a food additive should comply both with the food additive legislation and also be labelled in compliance with the appropriate food labelling legislation

The Commission was informed that such extract may also undergo a microbiological fermentation, which transforms the nitrate into nitrite, before it is used in the meat production process. The nitrite present in the fermented broth will have a technological function in the final food such as preservation and colour stabilisation and can be deliberately used as a food additive.

Nitrites are authorised in meat products, in most cases at a maximum amount that may be added during the manufacture of 150 mg/kg. The nitrites used must comply with the purity criteria laid down in Directive 2008/84/EC. Nitrite added to food under the form of fermented vegetable broth does not comply with the criteria laid down in this Directive.

This issue was discussed at a meeting of the Working Party of Governmental Experts on Food Additives of 15 February 2010. The majority of the Member States experts confirmed that such a practice would be a deliberate use of a food additive if used for the intended technological purposes, such as preservation and colouring, in the final food. Consequently this use must comply with the food additive legislation, including the conditions of use in Annex III to Directive 95/2/EC as well as the purity criteria in Annex I to Commission Directive 2008/84/EC.

Therefore an authorisation is required implying an update of the Directive 2008/84/EC laying down purity criteria. Furthermore, clarification is needed in order to assure that the added nitrite complies with the maximum allowed levels laid down in Directive 95/2/EC.