



Why is “nutritional labelling” not adapted to farmhouse and artisan cheese and dairy products?

Please, read this message and give us your support!

The European Union has recently introduced compulsory “nutritional labelling” on prepacked food, except food directly supplied by the manufacturer to the final consumer in small quantities, or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer.

Although farmhouse and artisan cheeses and dairy products are often sold directly, at markets or on farms, without pre-packaging, they also are sometimes sold in prepacked form to hyper and supermarkets and not locally, as well as in longer circuits: via affineurs, wholesalers or other distribution platforms. In these cases, they are affected by this regulation, and will have to be labelled with their energy value, their amount of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugar, protein and salt.

This part of the regulation is very difficult to apply to farmhouse and artisan cheese and dairy products, mostly because these products are not standardized: they are handcrafted, made with traditional methods, often with raw milk and often without any additions apart from milk, rennet and lactic acid bacteria. Yet, raw milk has normal variations in its composition throughout the year. The season, the lactation stage, and the diet of the animals affect the amount of fat, protein and other components. This is even more extreme if milk from a single herd is used. As a result, the nutritional content of the final products varies. To be able to provide meaningful nutritional information, producers would have to check the nutrient content of their products at several moments in the year, and use different stocks of labels according to the results. Most of them would not be able to bear the costs.

Main characteristic of farmhouse and artisan dairy products is not how they are sold but how they are produced. Our experience as producers is that consumers do see and understand this: they don't buy farmhouse and artisan dairy products because of their nutritional value, but with the assurance of buying a unique and valuable food.

We believe that most consumers are keen to know the nutritional information, when processed food products are concerned. But they don't have the same questions towards farmhouse and artisan cheeses and dairy products, which are barely processed.

Of course, we agree that consumers have to be properly informed to be able to make their decisions. But in the case of our products, mandatory nutritional labelling is not a solution, because of the difficulties to provide accurate information. On the other hand, our producer associations would like to discuss alternative means to present this information to the consumer, such as information campaigns, open farms and open dairies....

For the reasons explained above, FACEnetwork requests the nutritional labelling to be optional for farmhouse and artisan cheese and dairy products, regardless of the method of sale and whether they are prepacked or not.

You can support this request, and help us to convince the decision-makers, by signing this petition online. You will find the link on our website:

www.face-network.eu