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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Food safety: UEAPME welcomes SME-friendly initiatives regarding traceability requirements and hygiene requirements

Brussels, 17 December 2004 UEAPME, the European crafts and SMEs employers association, praised the latest efforts made by the European Commission to render legislation on foodstuffs more suited to crafts and SMEs in the food sector. In two separate working papers issued in November, the Commission proposes to facilitate the implementation of hygiene control requirements in SMEs and to take into account the constraints of very small business regarding traceability requirements.

European regulation on the hygiene of foodstuffs requires all food business operators to put in place, implement and maintain a permanent procedure based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP). This procedure encompasses a comprehensive set of time-consuming steps to ensure and safeguard food hygiene. Whilst large enterprises can fully comply with the measures foreseen in the HACCP principles, crafts and small business often do not have the human and financial resources to be as exhaustive as the principles require.

For this reason the Commission proposes to facilitate the application of the HACCP principles for very small business and crafts (fewer than 10 persons and no more than 2 million Euro turnover). If accepted by the EU Council and the EU Parliament, the proposal would enable small bakeries and butchers for instance to comply with basic food hygiene measures. The proposal also envisages excluding the obligation to carry out procedure based on HACCP for business not preparing, manufacturing or processing food such as market stalls, grocery shops etc. These businesses would have to implement prerequisite requirements to ensure the elimination of food hazards.

With regard to traceability, in a working paper about hygiene package regulation, the Commission recommends that traceability requirements have to take into account the constraints of very small business. The Commission proposes that small food operators must simply have in place a system enabling them to identify the immediate supplier and immediate customer of their products.

“We very much welcome the Commission’s initiatives. In proposing more flexible food safety requirements for traceability and hygiene, the Commission is actually ensuring that all the industry actors including very small enterprises can contribute to the mission of making food production in the EU safer for the consumer”, **Hans-Werner Müller**, Secretary- General of UEAPME said.

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Note to editors: For further information, please contact Ludger Fischer on tel +32 2 230 7599.

Raphael Anspach, Press officer
Tel: +32 2 230 7599/ Fax: +32 472 33 3525
Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com
Web: www.ueapme.com/pressroom