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Council of the EU adopts legislation on fertilisers labelling

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The European Union Council has adopted a regulation for digital labelling of fertilising products. This is the last step in the decision-making procedure. The regulation approved promotes the use of digital labels on EU fertilising products while keeping physical labels where they are necessary. It also improves the readability of labels and simplifies the labelling obligations of suppliers.Â Following the Councilâ??s approval of the European Parliament's position, the legislative act has been adopted.

The regulation updates the existing regulation about fertilizersâ?? labels. It promotes the use of digital labelling to reduce the costs, bureaucracy, and environmental footprint for producers. Digital labels will have a life-time of at least 10 years since a product is placed on the market. The regulation also ensures the availability of information by physical means to protect vulnerable consumers or people with limited digital competences. Digital labels will also be proposed for products sold in bulk, provided that the necessary information is also displayed in physical format in a visible place at the point of sale. The Commission will be empowered to update the general digital labelling requirements through delegated acts.

Digital labels are QR or bar codes that redirect the user to a web page where the information of the label is stored. Digital solutions reduce substantially the cost of labelling and at the same time make it easy to update its content. Furthermore, the quantity and quality of the information that can be stored in a digital label are much higher compared with a physical label, whose readability can prove difficult, especially small packages. However, the level of digital literacy varies among social groups and ages, and some vulnerable groups may have difficulties to understand the functioning of digital labels or smart devices.

In the EU, digital labelling is already used for some products containing chemicals, for instance batteries, and rules for digital labelling are under consideration for other products (i.e. detergents, cosmetics and other chemicals). The simplification of labelling obligations is expected to reduce annual costs by, on average, â?¬57 000 for a large company and â?¬4 500 for an SME.

Up until now, regulation (EU) 2019/1009 stablished the requirements for the labelling of fertilisers. The Commissionâ??s proposal was published on 27 February 2023. Co-legislators reached a provisional agreement on 22 January 2024.