THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IS PREPARING A DIRECTIVE ON PAINTS, VARNISHES, WAXES, PLASTIC PACKAGING, ETC. - TOWARDS REGULATIONS ON "HALOGENOUS HYDROCARBONS" (PARTICULARLY PCB)

BRUSSELS (EC), Wednesday 18 October 1972 - Replying to written question No. 190/72 from Mr. Vredeling, the European Commission has taken stock on a particular aspect of the fight against pollution and the protection of the environment: the elimination of halogenous hydrocarbons, and, in particular, of PCBs. The Commission has already proposed:

- a draft regulation for fruit and vegetables (pesticide residues),
- a draft regulation for animal feedstuffs (undesirable substances),
- coordinated research on the detection and effects of certain micro-organisms, including PCBs.

It is preparing other drafts, amongst which a directive on paints, varnishes, inks, waxes, plastic packaging, etc.

The text of the reply to question No. 190/72 is as follows:

"Research has been carried out in certain countries in the Community, the Netherlands and Germany in particular, and also in Great Britain. This research has related chiefly to the detection of PCBs in water (both soft and salt) and, to a lesser extent, to the toxic effects of these substances on man and animals. The presence of PCBs has been detected in fish, molluscs, birds, various foodstuffs, and even in human milk. This research, which until now has given only fragmentary results, is being continued.

In addition, a systematic survey, in which certain Community countries are taking part, is being carried out by the OECD on pesticide residues (PCB, DDT and mercury) in samples of wild fauna: these studies, which started in 1972, will go on for three years.

The Commission also reminds the Honourable Member of Parliament that, in its communication to the Council on an environment programme of the European Communities, it proposed a coordinated research project on the detection and effects of certain micro-pollutants, including PCBs.

The Commission has taken note of the standards established in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration concerning the amounts of PCB admissible in food products and in packaging. In addition, notification of this American law has been given within the framework of the OECD.

As it stated in the aforementioned communication, the Commission has already presented the Council with proposals for regulations on residues of pesticides in fruit and vegetables, and on undesirable substances in animal feedstuffs. Other drafts are being studied at present, with a view to their being presented to the Council.

In the framework of the general programme on the elimination of technical barriers to trade, the Commission is examining the problems raised by the control, or even the partial or complete prohibition, of PCB in "open system" substances, such as paints, varnishes, inks, waxes, plastic packaging, etc.

A proposal for a directive on these products is being prepared".

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