European Community Common Position on the Consideration of Country of Origin Labelling
(Point 13 of the CAC Agenda)

The European Community is very concerned that no consensus could be reached on the need for new work on country of origin labelling at the thirty-second session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) held in Montréal, Canada, 10 – 14 May 2004.

From the European Community point of view, mentioning the origin of the food or of certain ingredients in the labelling can be valuable information for the consumer under certain circumstances. Moreover it is a way to reduce the misleading claims concerning country of origin (in accordance with the objective of item 10 of CCFL32). The European Community is therefore favourable to the continuation of discussions on the declaration of the country (or place) of origin in the labelling of food within Codex Alimentarius and it believes that the appropriate place for this discussion is the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL).

The European Community is concerned that in the absence of appropriate harmonised standards at the level of Codex Alimentarius, member countries will develop their own rules in this matter where there are consumer’s increasing legitimate demands and this will result in barriers to international trade, possibly leading to trade disputes.

The European Community is therefore suggesting that the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) should instruct the Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) to engage work, with the purpose of establishing guidelines for the implementation of Section 4.5 of the Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Prepackaged Foods in respect of:

- specifying circumstances under which member countries may provide that the country (or place) of origin be required in the labelling of products for the purpose of allowing consumers to make informed choices;
- specifying circumstances under which declaration of the country (or place) of origin should be mandatory in order to avoid that consumers be misled to a material degree as to the true origin or provenance of the food;
- defining conditions for the voluntary use of the term ‘produce of’ and other similar terms used for indicating the origin or provenance of a food or a food ingredient;

and, if necessary, of amending this Section.