

# MEP blasts Commission for bias against wood packaging

The European Commission should not take decisions affecting a whole industry based on the flawed opinion of one or two member states, Spanish Socialist MEP Andrés Perelló Rodríguez told a meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels last week.

Speaking at a 31 May meeting on the “priorities and challenges faced by the wood packaging sector” organised by the European lightweight packaging network Grow International, Perelló said that the Commission’s Health and Consumer Protection Directorate DG SANCO’s decision to declare wood packaging unsuitable at EU level for the transport and packaging of fish products “irrespective of the hygienic standards” was “creating obstacles to free competition with other types of material”.

“There is currently a polemical debate regarding the limits of wood packaging in terms of hygiene, resilience and water-tightness, yet there is no scientific evidence to prove that wood packaging was not adequate as a food contact material,” he said, pointing out that wood, just like other materials, was regulated.

“As is the case today with most materials, there is a significant deficiency of legislation and methods for characterisation of food contact materials when compared with plastic... This is mainly due to food security priorities of the EU,” a representative of Grow International, that gathers the national organisations from Germany (Grow GMBH), Spain (FEDEMCO), France (SIEL) and Portugal (EMBAR).

Perelló said that there was no justification behind the lack of confidence regarding the resistance of wood packaging during transport processes particularly in the light of “new waterproofing systems and the long history of wooden containers in transporting foods such as fish”. The MEP criticised the other packaging industries for having lobbied hard to get their point across.

He insisted wood was a strategic sector for the EU as it is a source of renewable energy, easy to recycle and a contributor to the fight against climate change. He said that until there was scientific evidence that wood packaging should not come into contact with food, the European Parliament would support the sector.