

19122 ‘Veggie discs’ to replace veggie burgers in EU crackdown on food labels

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Veggie burgers are for the chop, a Brussels committee has decreed, to be replaced by the less appetizing “veggie discs”.

And it won’t be just bean or mushroom burgers condemned to the food bin of history. Vegan sausages, tofu steaks and soya escalopes could all be approaching their best-before date, after a vote in the European parliament on revisions to a food-labelling regulation.

In a move that some Members of the European Parliament suspect is influenced by the meat industry, the parliament’s agriculture committee this week approved a ban on producers of vegetarian food using nomenclature usually deployed to describe meat.

The protected designations would include steak, sausage, burger and hamburger, under a revised regulation that passed with 80% approval. The measures will now be voted on by the full parliament after May’s European elections.

The French MEP Éric Andrieu, responsible for overseeing the legislation, said the prohibition was just “common sense” and he appealed to Europeans’ sense of foodie history.

“The meat lobby is not involved in this,” he said. “It has generated a considerable debate among the political groups and a large majority wanted to clarify things. Particularly in the light of the history we share, you can have a steak or burger, you can’t call it something else.”

The decision to protect meat-related terms and names “exclusively for edible parts of the animals” was firmly opposed by Non-Governmental Organizations such as Greenpeace and Birdlife who insisted it presented a blow against sustainable food.

Veggie disc has emerged as one possible, yet possibly unappetizing, new name for plant-based burgers.

Molly Scott Cato, a Green MEP, said she had taken some comfort from the development, although she had some doubts about the motivation behind the new labelling rules.

“The suspicion is that this has come from the meat industry out of panic at the fact that young people are moving away from eating meat,” she said. “It is a clear indication that they are worried about their market being undercut. »

“It wasn’t as if people were buying veggie burgers and asking: ‘Where’s my meat?’ People are moving increasingly towards a plant-based diet, and young people at a terrific speed.”

“Rather than say ‘I can’t eat bacon so I am going to make something that tastes like bacon out of some weird micro food’, you can have a very nice cuisine that starts with vegetables and not a meat substitute. I think this could unlock a lot of creativity.”