

Romania: President of Consumer Protection Authority looking to strengthen enforcement regime

At a recent conference held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Marius Parvu, the President of the Romanian Consumer Protection Authority (“CPA”) voiced his dissatisfaction with the current penalty regime applicable to breaches of consumer protection law. Mr Parvu indicated that legislative solutions must be established to allow the CPA to definitively shut down operators which endanger public health through their activities, as well as allowing them to apply fines calculated on the turnover of the defaulting operator.

In Mr Parvu’s opinion, the current penalty regime is too relaxed, and therefore does not encourage voluntary compliance. The President of the CPA will work together with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to create new legislation allowing for additional sanctions, such as temporary suspension of activity for 30 days, 6 months, one year or even indefinitely where public health is endangered.

The President of the CPA listed inconsistencies between product labels and product contents as being the greatest issue from a consumer protection perspective. To address this, the CPA will undergo a process of reorganisation, with inspectors dedicated specifically to foodstuffs in order to ensure compliance with consumer protection regulations. The President of the CPA is also looking to strengthen collaboration with the customs authorities, so that goods coming from outside of the European Community will be scrutinized with greater consideration to ensure that they meet local consumer protection standards.

The statements were made in the context of a conference presenting the results of last year’s audits/inspections into 241 operations selling foodstuff to the population (e.g. bakeries, restaurants, fast-food units, hypermarkets with their own bakeries etc), which found that almost 75% of these operators inaccurately inform their consumers on the use of hydrogenated fats, and misleading consumers who believe they are buying milk-based products. Furthermore, the proportion of operators breaching consumer protection laws on a more general basis exceeds 50%, according to the President of the CPA.

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