

Part A Compulsory Translation 必译题

In the European Union, carrots must be firm but notwoody, cucumbers must not be too curved andcelery has to be free of any type of cavity. This was the law, one that banned overly curved,extra-

knobbly or oddly shaped produce from supermarket shelves.

But in a victory for opponents of European regulation,

100 pages of legislation determiningthe size, shape and texture of fruit and v egetables have been torn up. On Wednesday, EUofficials agreed to axe rules l aying down standards for 26 products, from peas to plums.

In doing so, the authorities hope they have killed off regulations routinely used by critics - mostnotably in the British media - to ridicule the meddling tendencies of the EU.

After years of news stories about the permitted angle or curvature of fruit an d vegetables, thedecision Wednesday also coincided with the rising price of c ommodities. With the cost of theweekly supermarket visit on the rise, it has become increasingly hard to defend the actofthrowing away food just becaus e it looks strange.

Beginning in July next year, when the changes go into force, standards on th e 26 products willdisappear altogether. Shoppers will the be able to chose the ir produce whatever itsappearance.

Under a compromise reached with national governments, many of which opp osed thechanges, standards will remain for 10 types of fruit and vegetables, i ncluding apples, citrus fruit,peaches, pears, strawberries and tomatoes.

But those in this category that do not meet European norms will still be allow ed onto themarket, providing they are marked as being substandard or inten ded for cooking orprocessing.

"This marks a new dawn for the curvy cucumber and the knobbly carrot," sai d Mariann FischerBoel, European commissioner for agriculture, who argued t hat regulations were better left tomarket operators.

"In these days of high food prices and general economic difficulties," Fischer Boel added,

"consumers should be able to choose from the widest range of products possi ble. It makes nosense to throw perfectly good products away, just because th ey are the 'wrong' shape."

That sentiment was not shared by 16 of the EU's 27 nations - including Greec e, France, theCzech Republic, Spain, Italy and Poland - which tried to block t

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he changes at a meeting of the Agricultural Management Committee.

Several worried that the abolition of standards would lead to the creation of national ones, said one official speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the discussions.

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Cogeca, which represents European agricultural trade unions and cooperatives, also criticized the changes.

"We fear that the absence of EU standards will lead member states to establish national standards and that private standards will proliferate," said its secretary general, Pekka Pesonen.

But the decision to scale back on standards will be welcomed by euro-skeptics who have long pilloried the EU executive's interest in intrusive regulation.

One such controversy revolved around the correct degree of bend in bananas - a type of fruit not covered by the Wednesday ruling.

In fact, there is no practical regulation on the issue. Commission Regulation (EC)

2257/94 says that bananas must be "free from malformation or abnormal curvature," though Class 1 bananas can have "slight defects of shape" and Class 2 bananas can have full "defects of shape."

By contrast, the curvature of cucumbers has been a preoccupation of European officials. Commission Regulation (EEC) No 1677/88 states that Class I and "Extra class" cucumbers are allowed a bend of 10 millimeters per 10 centimeters of length. Class II cucumbers can bend twice as much.

It also says cucumbers must be fresh in appearance, firm, clean and practically free of any visible foreign matter or pests, free of bitter taste and of any foreign smell.

Such restrictions will disappear next year, and about 100 pages of rules and regulations will go as well, a move welcomed by Neil Parish, chairman of the European Parliament's agriculture committee.

"Food is food, no matter what it looks like," Parish said.

"To stop stores selling perfectly decent food during a food crisis is morally unjustifiable. Credit should be given to the EU agriculture commissioner for pushing through these proposals. Consumers care about the taste and quality of food, not how it looks."

Part B Optional Translation 二选一题

Topic 1 选题一

Ask mothers why babies are constantly picking things up from the floor or ground and putting them in their mouths, and chances are they'll say that it's instinctive - that that's how babies explore the world. But why the mouth, when sight, hearing, touch and even scent are far better at identifying things?

Since all instinctive behaviors have an evolutionary advantage or they would not have been retained for millions of years, chances are that this one too has helped us survive as species. And, indeed, accumulating evidence strongly suggests that eating dirt is good for you.

In studies of what is called the hygiene hypothesis, researchers are concluding that organisms like the millions of bacteria, viruses and especially worms that enter the body along with "dirt" spur the development of a healthy immune system. Several continuing studies suggest that worms may help to redirect an immune system that has gone awry and resulted in autoimmune disorders, allergies and asthma.

One leading researcher, Dr. Joel Weinstock, the director of gastroenterology and hepatology at Tufts Medical Center in Boston, said in an interview that the immune system at birth "is like an unprogrammed computer. It needs instruction."

He said that public health measures like cleaning up contaminated water and food have saved the lives of countless children, but they "also eliminated exposure to many organisms that are probably good for us."

"Children raised in an ultra-clean environment," he added, "are not being exposed to organisms that help them develop appropriate immune regulatory circuits."

Studies he has conducted with Dr. David Elliott, a gastroenterologist and immunologist at the University of Iowa, indicate that intestinal worms, which have been all but eliminated in developed countries, are "likely to be the biggest player" in regulating the immune system to respond appropriately, Elliott said in an interview. He added that bacterial and viral infections seem to influence the immune system in the same way, but not as forcefully.

Most worms are harmless, especially in well-nourished people, Weinstock said.

"There are very few diseases that people get from worms," he said.

"Humans have adapted to the presence of most of them."

Ruebush deplores the current fetish for the hundreds of antibacterial product

s that convey a false sense of security and may actually foster the development of antibiotic-resistant, disease-causing bacteria. Plain soap and water are all that are needed to become clean, she noted.