



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate B. Quality, Research & Innovation, Outreach
The Director

Brussels

Art. 41(b) agri.dg1.b 4(2021)6611870

Art. 41(b) Privacy

I would like to thank you for your letter of 31 May 2021 (Our ref. Ares(2021)3582148), which was addressed to Art. 41(b) Privacy and concerned the use of ethylene for the degreening of organic citrus fruits. You referred to a draft legal act listing authorised inputs in organic production and wondered why the use of ethylene is allowed for bananas but not for citrus. Art. 41(b) Privacy asked me to reply as this legal act¹ is under my responsibility. Please accept my apologies for the late reply.

According to the Regulation on organic production, i.e. Regulation (EU) No 848/2018², and in particular its Article 24, only products duly necessary and in line with the objectives and principles of organic production can be authorised. Authorisations for these external inputs are based on requests from Member States, supported by a dossier showing the necessity and the compatibility with organic production. Dossiers are evaluated by the Expert Group for Technical advice on Organic Production (EGTOP). Based on EGTOP's advice, the Commission takes a decision on authorisation. In 2016, EGTOP³ provided an opinion on the possible use of ethylene for the degreening of citrus and stated that the product should not be used for that purpose, except in the context of a measure against prevention of damage by fruit flies.

This advice was followed by the Commission and resulted in the authorisation of ethylene with the current restriction "only on bananas and potatoes; however, it may also be used on citrus as part of a strategy for the prevention of fruit fly damage" in the draft legal act available for public consultation.

If there are other justifications than degreening for which ethylene is necessary, we could reconsider our decision but, both in your letter and in other letters that we received about the subject, it was emphasized that ethylene is not used to ensure the ripening of the fruits but that it is just used for reaching its typical colour: orange. Of course, consumers may expect that oranges have the colour of their name, but the colour is not essential. Indeed, ethylene is identical to the natural gas that escapes from ripe fruits, but also for natural products to be used as inputs into organic production a justification is needed.

¹ Published as Commission Implementing Regulation 1165/2021- [EUR-Lex - 32021R1165 - FN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R0848&from=EN>

³ EGTOP Annex II Draft/Final Report (europa.eu)

Art. 41(b) Privacy


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The present opinion is provided on the basis of the facts as set out in your letter of 31 May 2021 and expresses the view of the Commission services and does not commit the European Commission. In the event of a dispute involving Union law it is, under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, ultimately for the European Court of Justice to provide a definitive interpretation of the applicable Union law.

Yours sincerely,

Art. 4.1(h) Privacy



Nathalie SAUZE-VANDEVYVER