

Horsemeat scandal shows need for stiffer sanctions, EU says

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Brussels plans stiffer sanctions against food fraud following the discovery of mislabelled ready-made meals across Europe containing horsemeat instead of beef, the EU's health commissioner said Thursday.

"The scandal confirms the importance of proper controls and dissuasive sanctions," Health Commissioner Tonio Borg told the [European Parliament](#)'s health and food safety committee.

Borg said that "to reinforce the element of dissuasiveness," an upcoming proposal by the EU executive to review agri-food legislation will include a call on member states to agree financial penalties for intentional violations of food chain rules "at a level which [offsets](#) the [financial gain](#) sought through the violation."

Even in the case of false labelling, the penalty must serve "as an effective deterrent that shows that crime does not pay" and be at least equal to the economic gain made by those involved, he said.

Borg said the Commission also favoured tighter controls along the [food chain](#) "in case of risk".

New proposals for stiffer sanctions and tighter controls will be presented in the spring, said Borg's spokesman. But they will have to be agreed by both the parliament and the 27 member states, meaning they are unlikely to be ready before the end of the mandate of the present Commission in May 2014.

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