



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE MEETING OF THE  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH  
HELD ON 16 FEBRUARY 2010 IN BRUSSELS  
(Section: Biological Safety of the Food Chain)**

Chairman: K. Van Dyck

All the Member States were represented.

**1. Request by COPA-COGECA to amend the scope of a Community Guide for Good Hygiene Practice in broiler production (split into two parts: primary production and slaughterhouse) with possible endorsement of the first part (dealing with primary production).**

Copa-Cogeca and a.v.e.c. have drafted a voluntary guide for the poultrymeat industry with the aim of promoting the reduction of Salmonella prevalence in the production chain, in particular. At a meeting in November 2008 with Member States experts it appeared that, in general, Parts A and B on the farm and on catching, loading and transport were almost complete. However, Part C on the slaughterhouse needed further study. After the previous meeting on 1 April 2009, which was attended by officials from the Commission and the Member States, Copa-Cogeca and a.v.e.c. received the comments on 9 September 2009. Most of the comments referred to the chapter on the slaughterhouse, and more specifically to testing and sampling, hazard analysis and the overall structuring of the text on operational hygiene at the slaughterhouse. After a discussion at working group level, Copa-Cogeca and a.v.e.c. decided to include SANCO's comments on part A and B and also the relevant Codex standards in the text as requested. The working group decided to finalise the guide by adding a chapter relating to processes at the farm and during catching, loading and transport – and to continue working on part C relating to the slaughterhouse, which may then be included at a later stage.

Member States' experts were asked to agree to a reduction of the scope of the Community Guide to good hygiene practices in broiler production. The Commission official invited them to send their comments by 19 February and announced that the request from Copa-Cogeca and a.v.e.c. would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Standing Committee in March.

**2. EFSA proposal for 2009 zoonoses reporting within the framework of Directive 2003/99/EC. For possible endorsement.**

The EFSA official gave a brief account of the 2009 zoonoses reporting system within the framework of Directive 2003/99/EC. The members of SCFCAH carefully analysed the Excel table which the EFSA representative had distributed and explained to them.

EFSA's attention was drawn to the fact that the report could be more detailed. The Commission agreed. The Member States endorsed the proposal.

**2A. Information to the Member States on the ongoing discussion with USA on live bivalve molluscs.**

According to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, imports of products of animal origin are only authorised from a third country or a part of a third country which has provided satisfactory public health guarantees. For the United States, an FVO inspection was carried out from 2 to 16 March 2009. FVO inspectors observed that the US and the EU control systems differ substantially on key points. Due to these differences, the FVO was unable to conclude that the US system offers the same level of protection as the EU system. Thus, the Commission was currently not in a position to propose the addition of the United States to the permanent list of third countries authorised to export bivalve molluscs, tunicates, echinoderms and marine gastropods to the EU. As DG SANCO had known of the main difficulties that would be encountered in advance of the FVO inspection, it had proposed to the US Food and Drug Administration, in June 2008, that they should engage in an exercise to determine reciprocal equivalence on this very specific issue. This exercise would have allowed the access of EU bivalve molluscs to the US, which has been blocked since the 1980s. That proposal was accepted by the US Food and Drug Administration, as a result of which the European Commission was able to propose to EU Member States that imports from the USA should provisionally be maintained until 1 July 2010 (Commission Decision 2009/951/EU). An initial two-day meeting took place with the US FDA on 27 and 28 February 2010 with the aim of agreeing terms of reference for conducting the comparison exercise. The European Union said that it had an open mind for any solution that would allow EU exports to the US. Moreover, the EU and the US agreed to set up three dedicated working groups to explore the following issues: health surveys for the classification of harvesting areas; toxins and phytoplankton; and official controls. At this stage, it would be appropriate to identify those Member States which might be interested in exporting bivalve molluscs for human consumption to the United States and to learn more about the nature of the exports. It will then be necessary to appoint a group of technical experts to undertake the negotiations. The main task of the experts will be to assess the information provided by the US authorities, to prepare and support applications by the EU Member States for exports to the US. United Kingdom, Denmark, France, Italy and Spain expressed their interest in assisting EU in these discussions.

**2B. Request from Italy on the placing on the market of sea water for human consumption.**

On 22 January 2010, Italy sent a letter to the Commission informing the latter that some Italian operators were interested in placing sea water on the market. Italy wanted clarification from the Commission as to whether sea water can be considered as a foodstuff. The Commission sent an e-mail to all Member States to ascertain whether this product was authorised on the national markets. It emerged that sea water had been marketed only in the Netherlands, but the authorisation had eventually been withdrawn. In order to obtain scientific evaluation on the safety of sea water as food, the Commission will mandate EFSA with this question. The issue will be discussed further.

**3. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin (SANCO/4449/2009) (subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, Articles 9 and 10(1))**

The draft Regulation had already been discussed on several occasions at meetings of the working group and of the SCFCAH. The Commission official explained the main purpose of the proposal in detail, pointing out the amendments which had been made in the new revised version. Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, which was to be amended, contained, *inter alia*, rules on the transport of 'foie gras', the freezing conditions for poultry meat and requirements for packages of live bivalve molluscs when transported from the dispatch centre for retail sale.

Member States had some comments to make on the draft proposal. In the light of the results of the discussion, the Commission redrafted the text and put the new draft to a vote. The Standing Committee unanimously endorsed the draft Regulation.

**4. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annexes I and II to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption (SANCO/4456/2009) (subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, Articles 16 and 17(1))**

The main purpose of the draft proposal was to amend Annexes I and II to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 which laid down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption. This Regulation laid down specific rules for the classification of production areas for live bivalve molluscs, live echinoderms, live tunicates and live marine gastropods. The Commission official explained that it had been demonstrated that animals such as marine gastropods with a grazing lifestyle posed a substantially lower health risk than filter-feeding bivalve molluscs. No epidemiological information had been reported supporting a linkage between the risks to public health and the rules on microbiological classification of production areas for marine gastropods not filter feeders. It was therefore appropriate to assume that abandoning the requirement for classification of production areas for marine gastropods not filter feeders would pose no added risk to public health.

In response to comments made by some Member States, the text was amended slightly and revision 9 of the draft Regulation was put to a vote.

The Standing Committee unanimously endorsed the draft.

**5. Exchange of views on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annex X to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the list of rapid tests (SANCO/10113/2010) (subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; legal basis Regulation (EC) No 999/2001, Art. 23a).**

The proposal has been already discussed at Working Group level on several occasions. This proposal follows the recent EFSA advice relating to the sensitivity of the rapid post mortem test. On 18 December 2009, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published an opinion on the analytical sensitivity of approved TSE rapid tests based on a study performed by the Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) for TSEs. The CRL study was intended to evaluate the analytical sensitivity of all the currently approved TSE rapid tests in order to produce robust analytical sensitivity data and evaluate each test against the same sample sets for the three main types of ruminant TSE: BSE, classical scrapie and atypical scrapie. As regards BSE, the EFSA concluded in its opinion that, due to specificity problems which hamper the interpretation of their analytical sensitivity and the comparison with other approved tests, the "Prionics®-Check LIA" and "Prionics®-Check PrioSTRIP" tests can no longer be recommended for the monitoring of BSE in cattle in the EU. As regards scrapie, EFSA concluded that the tests "Enfer TSE v2", "Enfer TSE v3", "Prionics®-Check LIA SR" and "Prionics®-WB Check Western SR"

could fail to identify atypical scrapie cases which other validated tests would detect and, according to the EFSA protocol for evaluation of rapid post mortem tests to detect TSE in small ruminants (EFSA, 2007b), they cannot be recommended for use in TSE monitoring in the field. Based on this opinion, the Commission is proposing to amend the lists of rapid tests approved for the monitoring of BSE in cattle and TSEs in small ruminants, contained in point 4 of Chapter C of Annex X to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001.

**6. Exchange of views on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards farmed game (SANCO/10308/2010) (subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny, legal basis Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, Art. 10 (2)).**

The purpose of this proposal is to amend Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, which provides that food business operators may slaughter farmed ratites and farmed ungulates at the place of origin with the authorisation of the competent authority, if specified conditions are fulfilled. Two documents must accompany the slaughtered animals to the slaughterhouse, one signed by the food business operator and a certificate issued and signed by the official or approved veterinarian. The certificate issued and signed by the official or approved veterinarian is to certify a favourable result of the ante-mortem inspection, correct slaughter and bleeding and the date and time of slaughter. In general, food business operators are responsible for the slaughter and bleeding of animals. It should be made possible for them to declare and sign that slaughter and bleeding was carried out in compliance with the relevant legal requirements. The competent authority should, therefore, be given the possibility of authorising such action on a case by case basis. Most of the Member States strongly supported the proposal, but made a number of comments. A new revision of the draft Regulation will be discussed again during the next meeting of Standing Committee in March.

**7. Exchange of views on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards farmed game (SANCO/10309/2010) (subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, Art. 17 (2)).**

The aim of this proposal is twofold: first, to provide a new specimen health certificate for animals slaughtered at the holdings and, secondly, to introduce a requirement of regular checks by the official or approved veterinarian to verify the performance of the person carrying out the slaughter and bleeding. The draft proposal will be discussed again at the next SCFCAH meeting.

### **Miscellaneous**

- **Information from the Commission on the erroneous publication of the Commission Decision concerning a financial contribution from the Union towards a coordinated monitoring programme on the prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in certain ready-to-eat foods to be conducted in the Member States (SANCO/5100/2009).**

The Commission official explained that, on 10 February 2010, the Commission Decision concerning a financial contribution from the Union towards a coordinated monitoring programme on the prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in certain ready-to-eat foods to be carried out in the Member States was erroneously published in the Official Journal of the European Union. Consequently, on 16 February, the OJ published a corrigendum stating that the publication of Decision 2010/75/EU should be considered as null and void.

The Commission explained that the adoption of the mentioned act had had to be blocked because of the error in Article 6(1) concerning the Union budget line. Although the budget line has since been amended, the Commission procedures require a further internal consultation to decide whether a re-vote is needed. It was emphasized that there is however no intention to change the financial contribution for the Listeria survey.

- **Information on Norovirus outbreaks in Finland caused by raspberries originating from Poland.**

The Finnish authorities have drawn the Commission's attention to several norovirus outbreaks in Finland during 2009 caused by raspberries originating from Poland. Since June 2009, the Finnish Food Safety Authority, Evira, has issued three alerts on confirmed positive batches through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). Three outbreaks have also been reported in Eurosurveillance. For the time being, Evira has recommended that frozen imported raspberries should undergo heat treatment.

According to the information gained via the RASFF system, the Polish authorities have taken steps on the basis of the alerts notified by Finland. They have visited the raspberry plantations and establishments handling raspberries after harvesting, and have given advice to the operators in order to improve hygiene. The authorities have also taken samples to verify the presence of norovirus, in both raw material and frozen raspberries. Due to the lack of labelling information after repackaging of the berries by the Finnish recipient, it had been impossible to trace back the origin of the berries in Poland in any of the cases. The Polish representative promised to provide the Commission and the Member States with more detailed information on this issue.

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Director