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HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/8042/2006 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN GREECE
FROM 21/02/2006 TO 01/03/2006
CONCERNING ANIMAL WELFARE
DURING TRANSPORT
AND AT THE TIME OF SLAUGHTER

Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected. Clarifications provided by the Greek Competent Authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic, type, to the relevant part of the report.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the outcome of a mission carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in Greece, from 21 February to 1 March 2006.

The objective of the mission was to evaluate the guarantees given by the Central Competent Authority (CCA) to address the recommendations in report DG(SANCO)/7273/2004 concerning animal welfare during transport and at slaughter.

The report concludes that there has been little progress in the implementation of the actions proposed by the CCA. Although staffing levels are a problem this does not account for the overall level of ineffectiveness of the control system. Apart from the limited effect produced by visits by the CCA's Inspection and Control Directorate, the CCA has been unable to ensure an overall effective and appropriate level of control, with certain local CAs continuing to give no priority to these issues.

In relation to the transport of animals, the quality of the checks still remains insufficient. Even where deficiencies were detected, these have never been followed by written warnings or sanctions as indicated in the CCA action plan. Furthermore, deficiencies were not reported to the CCA, as required by EU legislation and as indicated in the CCA action plan.

In relation to animal welfare at slaughter, there was a wide variation in standards and actions taken, with some local CAs providing a completely unacceptable level of control.

The report requests the CAs to fully implement the action plan which was previously proposed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Greece from 21/02/2006 to 01/03/2006 as part of the planned mission programme of the Food and Veterinary office (FVO).

The mission team comprised three inspectors from the FVO and an official from the Unit of Legal Affairs, also within the Health and Consumer Protection General Directorate (DG SANCO). The team was divided into two sub-teams for the visits, and each sub-team was accompanied during the whole mission by a representative from the central competent authority (CCA), the Greek Ministry of Rural Development and Food.

An opening meeting was held on 21 February 2006 with the CCA. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the mission were confirmed by the inspection team, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission requested.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The objective of the mission was to verify the guarantees given to address the recommendations in report DG(SANCO)/7273/04 (hereafter: report 7273/2004).

In pursuit of this objective, the following meetings were held and the following sites visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	2	Opening and closing meetings.
	Prefectural	7	The Veterinary Directorates of the prefectural administrations (hereafter: local CAs) of Kilkis, Serres, Thesprotia, Laconia, Messinia, Achaia, Ilia.
Slaughterhouses		13	One for poultry and 12 for red meat species. Each slaughterhouse was selected by the inspection sub-teams from a list provided by the CCA.
Ports		2	Patras (Achaia) and Igoumenitsa (Thesprotia), where transiting consignments of live animals were inspected by the local CA.
Border Inspection Post		1	The Border Inspection Post (hereafter: BIP) of Promachonas.

3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and in particular, Article 10 of Directive 91/628/EEC^{1,2}, Article 14 of Directive 93/119/EC³ and Article 45 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004⁴.

¹ Legal acts quoted in this report refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

² Council Directive 91628/EEC of 19 November 1991 on the protection of animals during transport and amending Directives 90/425/EEC and 91/496/EEC, OJ L 340 11.12.1991, p. 17 (hereafter: Directive 91/628/EEC).

4. BACKGROUND

A previous mission with the same subject was carried out in 2000, twice in 2003 and most recently from 4 to 8 October 2004 (hereafter: missions 1060/2000, 9002/2003, 9211/2003 and 7273/2004). The CCA made commitments to address the recommendations made in these reports.

Report 7273/2004 concluded that progress in implementing the commitments given by the CCA in response to previous recommendations had been slow and not fully adequate. Regarding animal welfare during transport the situation remained largely unchanged, with illegal movements of animals still occurring and checks seldom sufficient to ensure that requirements are respected. Regarding welfare at slaughter, although there was some, albeit belated, progress with implementation of commitments, serious problems persisted. In response to the recommendations of report 7273/2004, the CCA provided guarantees in the form of an action plan on 13 May 2005 and requested the local CAs to provide the results of the actions taken within specified deadlines, but an incomplete response was received. On 22 December 2005, after the current FVO mission had been announced, the CCA wrote again to the local CAs requesting them to provide details of the actions taken.

The reports of the above missions are available under their reference number on the FVO internet site:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ir_search_en.cfm

5. MAIN FINDINGS

5.1. Competent authority

In response to the recommendation to ensure that adequate resources are employed at all levels, the CCA indicated that some recruitment has been completed and further recruitment is ongoing.

It was noted that:

- There are currently two officials responsible at central level for the implementation of EU animal welfare legislation, as one additional veterinarian was recruited in 2005.
- The CCA's Inspection and Control Directorate carried out audits of the implementation of animal welfare inspections in 2005 in two prefectures. Six audits have been scheduled for 2006 on these topics.

³ Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, OJ L 340 31.12.1993, p. 21 (hereafter: Directive 93/119/EC)

⁴ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules (EC) No 882/2004, OJ L 165 of 30.04.2004, p. 1 corrected and republished in OJ L 191, 28.05.2004, p. 1 (hereafter: Regulation (EC) No 882/2004)

- In Thesprotia there were five permanent veterinarians and two more were expected to be recruited within the next six weeks.
- In Kilkis there were 23 full time veterinarians, some of whom had been recruited in 2005. Two more veterinarians had been recruited on a temporary basis on an eight month contract.
- In Serres there were 28 veterinarians; six recently recruited and one on an eight month contract, while two more veterinarians were expected to be in post shortly.
- In Messinia, there were 13 veterinarians, three of whom were temporary and one was on an eight month contract; five of the permanent officials were to retire in the next three years.
- In Laconia, there were 10 veterinarians; two more were expected to be recruited but no date had been fixed as to when the new staff would arrive.
- In Ilia, there were 15 veterinarians and two more on seasonal contracts. The Director indicated that forty veterinarians were needed and some staff complained that they worked alone in the field stations without administrative or auxiliary staff.

5.2. Training

In response to a recommendation to ensure that inspectors receive adequate practical training to enable them to carry out thorough inspections, the CCA requested the local CAs to ensure that animal welfare inspections are performed by veterinarians who have participated in the relevant training. The most recent training was a seminar on animal health and welfare organised in April 2004. The CCA indicated that a training seminar for 60 veterinarians is planned in 2006.

The following was noted:

- In Achaia, Ilia, Messinia and Laconia there was a good level of awareness of animal welfare requirements. In Messinia, the Director indicated that the course on welfare at slaughter, which was organised in Thessalonica in 2001 with the participation of an NGO, was particularly useful, but that the seminars in Athens, which other members of staff had attended, had been less practical. A guidance document and video had been distributed by the CCA to all local CAs on animal welfare at slaughter following the training in Thessaloniki.
- In the other three local CAs, none of the veterinarians were aware of the minimum standards in relation to lairaging, stunning and bleeding of animals. None of the veterinarians in charge of the ante-mortem and post-mortem checks at the slaughterhouses visited in Kilkis, Serres and Thesprotia had attended animal welfare training. Formal training had been attended in 2001 either by officials that afterwards left their job

(Kilkis)⁵, or by senior officials who were not primarily involved in animal welfare inspections (Serres).

- The two veterinarians carrying out transport checks at Igoumenitsa port (Thesprotia) had attended a seminar in 2004.

5.3. Transporters' authorisation

In response to the recommendation to enhance the system of authorisation of transporters (Article 5 of Directive 91/628/EEC) the CCA requested the local CAs to:

- inform all the transporters in writing that they are responsible for renewing the authorisation, that they must apply for renewal one month before their expiring date, and that they are responsible for communicating any change concerning drivers and vehicles;
- send by 20.06.2005 a list of the authorised transporters;
- complete an amended form for inspection of vehicles prior to issuing the transporters authorisation, that includes additional questions regarding the floor surface and the equipment for loading/unloading animals; complete the new model of authorisation for transporters with address and contact details, VAT number, and species of animal transported;
- render the permit invalid in case infringements are detected concerning the validity of the permit or changes in respect of its content, and to impose sanctions if the transporter continues this activity.

It was noted that:

- 49 out of 54 local CAs replied indicating that they had informed the transporters in their jurisdiction in relation to their obligations. This had been complied with in all the local CAs visited.
- A list of all transporters was available at central level and was in the process of being revised following cross checks of the data provided. Lists were available in each local CA visited; however, in Laconia, according to the CA, a general reminder letter had been sent to all transporters whose authorisation had expired, but the CA could not provide any reminder letter referring to individual transporters when requested by the inspection team.
- The information concerning the loading surface of vehicles, which was requested by the CCA, had not been included in all the transporters' files: none in Serres; not in one out of three transporters in Kilkis and for neither of the two major cattle importers in Messinia.

⁵ *In their comments on a draft version of this report, the Greek Authorities noted that on completion of the FVO's inspections, the local authorities in Kilkis organised two meetings with all the veterinarians in their jurisdiction responsible for inspecting animal protection during slaughter and culling.*

- In Greece no infringements have been reported to the CCA concerning transporters' authorisation. However, in Laconia one transporter had been approved although he had not provided a sufficient written undertaking (Article 5(A)(1)(a)(ii) of Directive 91/628/EEC) and a representative of the CA at the BIP stated that transporters from Third Countries without a valid authorisation are accepted and that such an authorisation is not issued by the Greek CA (Article 5(A)(1)(a)(ii) of Directive 91/628/EEC).

5.4. Transport checks

5.4.1. Programme of controls

In response to the recommendation to establish a programme for transport inspections (Article 8 of Directive 91/628/EEC), in May 2005 the CCA requested the local CAs to submit a programme for the year 2005 covering at least 30% of the animals transported, focusing in particular on consignments with certificate for slaughter, holdings of destination where transport lasts more than eight hours, holdings of origin for domestic transportation, and the ports of Patras and Igoumenitsa.

The CCA pointed out that 23 local CAs had prepared a programme of inspection as requested, 22 indicated that they had not and nine did not reply.

In relation to the programme of checks the following was noted:

- Only Messinia, out of the seven local CAs visited, had drawn up a programme. Rather than organising checks of 30% of movements at various locations as requested by the CCA, they had focused on checks at slaughterhouses. It was estimated that the checks would account for about 20% of bovine animals, 10% of pig movements and 5 % of sheep and goats. In any case, the number of checks actually carried out fell short of this, already reduced, target.
- In Kilkis the CA representative stated that, due to insufficient staff, animal welfare checks are not performed and controls on consignments from other Member States or from Third Countries focus on the identification of bovine animals only.
- In Serres a feasibility study had been performed and the CA concluded that the controls at farms of departure, when issuing movement permits for domestic transportation, cover the requested 30%. The inspection team noted that movement permits can be issued up to ten days in advance and do not indicate the date and time of departure, making this a generally unsuitable time to perform animal welfare checks. In relation to checks at destination, the CA indicated that such checks are performed mostly at the slaughterhouse; however, there was no evidence of such controls and, in addition, ante-mortem records were not kept at the slaughterhouse where animals from Third Countries were directly unloaded.

- In Thesprotia a programme had not been established. The consignments of live animals from other Member States and from Third Countries to this region were for breeding only and controls performed ca. one week after arrival were for animal health and identification purposes. Controls on consignments arriving at slaughterhouses were not performed as the local CA indicated that ante-mortem inspection is not carried out.
- In relation to controls on consignments transiting through the ports of Igoumenitsa and Patras, these were carried out on a random basis. In 2005 in Igoumenitsa twelve inspections had been performed on road vehicles disembarking from Ro-Ro ferries, but not on consignments embarking on ferries for Italy. In Patras checks were carried out two or three days a week.
- The CA responsible for the port of Piraeus indicated that controls on transiting consignments of live animals are not carried out because the timetable of the ferries does not coincide with their working hours. Consignments of live animals from other Member States going to Cyprus, as well as consignments of pigs from Cyprus to Greece transit this port. Checks on the latter were also not performed at destination.

In relation to the quality of checks, checks on means of transport were seen in the two ports and at the BIP:

- In Patras and Igoumenitsa the inspections had been recently enhanced by providing an additional inspector. In Patras one of the inspectors was proficient in several languages and performed the documentary checks while the other did a systematic check of those aspects which could be easily inspected. Previous inspection reports indicated that deficiencies such as inadequate bedding, suspect overcrowding and occasional dead animals had been picked up. In Igoumenitsa, deficiencies such as insufficient headspace and inadequate watering devices were detected by the CA, but similar problems were not detected at the BIP, and in Patras insufficient headspace was not identified by the CA in a consignment of sheep seen during the visit. The CA also did not remark during the visit that sheep, which were lying down in one compartment, were being trampled on⁶. Although previous inspection reports had indicated cases where overstocking was suspected, they had no means of measuring this. In Igoumenitsa the CA also were unable to check the loading density.
- At the BIP, cases of overloading had been detected. The BIP official had asked the local CAs to limit import permissions for small ruminants to 600 heads per consignment and sent a letter on 17.01.2006 to Greek importers reminding them to respect animal welfare legislation, in particular that small ruminants should not be loaded on four decks; however, such trucks continued to be accepted. In relation to the fitness of animals for transport, the BIP official stated that small ruminants with broken limbs would be allowed to continue to their destination.

⁶ *In their comments on a draft version of this report, the Greek Authorities indicated that an administrative fine was imposed for this incident which has been approved by the Prefect, and has been forwarded to the Public Finance Service (Tax Office) for action.*

- At two slaughterhouses visited bovine animals with broken limbs or pelvis or which for other conditions were not able to stand, had been transported, contrary to the provisions of Article 12 of Directive 93/119/EC.

5.4.2. *Journey times*

As part of the programme of checks the CCA requested the local CAs to check route plans carefully and to include in the file of each transporter performing journeys of more than eight hours, a declaration concerning their regular routes, and to verify such declarations by comparing it with the particulars contained in the route plans.

It was noted that:

- Transporters involved in long distance transport were not located in all regions visited. Where they were located, except in Laconia, this exercise had been done. However, the information provided by the transporters did not provide the details which would be required for a route plan.
- In Kilkis the CA indicated that they did not carry out any checks of route plans. In Messinia, Laconia, Thesprotia and Ilia route plans which either indicated excessive journey times or had deficiencies in the route plans themselves had not been picked up by the CA. In Thesprotia, the original route plans were kept by the local CA rather than being given back to the transporter who must return them to the CA of origin (Article 5(A)(2)(d)(ii) of Directive 91/628/EEC).
- In Patras, the CA checked journey times up as far as the port, but not for the remaining part of the journey to the destination. The CA therefore did not detect that several consignments were exceeding their maximum times in travelling onwards to Lesbos and Chios. In any case, there were no facilities in the vicinity of the port or staging points elsewhere in Greece, where animals can be unloaded and rested to facilitate compliance with the requirements of Annex, Chapter VII, point 7(6) of Directive 91/628/EEC. This is also the case at Piraeus port with the result that consignments of live animals to and from Cyprus exceeding their journey times cannot be rested. At Igoumenitsa, there are facilities nearby the port where animals could be unloaded. These were built around ten years ago and were joint-financed with EU funds for use as part of a BIP. They are currently lying unused as, according to the Land Policy Service of the Ministry of Food and Rural affairs, the Minister has not sanctioned their use for consignments of live animals⁷.
- At the BIP of Promachonas, a representative of the CA stated that animals are not unloaded unless there is a suspected inconsistency in the

⁷ *In their comments on a draft version of this report, the Greek Authorities indicated that the installations of the former Igoumenitsa BIP are to be allocated to an operator who has expressed an interest in creating a staging point.*

documentation; however, Article 4(1) of Decision 97/794/EC⁸ requires that all animals must be unloaded at the BIP in order for adequate checks to be performed. The CA also indicated that consignments of live animals arriving at night would be sent to a facility and would be checked the following morning. However, a consignment of lambs from Bulgaria, which arrived at night during the FVO visit, did not undergo this procedure and continued to the slaughterhouse of destination.

5.4.3. *Corrective actions*

The CCA instructed the local CAs to take the following actions when an infringement is detected:

- To issue a written recommendation for a first infringement not accompanied by severe suffering of the animals and to impose an administrative fine when ascertaining more than one infringement on a second or later occasion.
- To withdraw the transporter's authorisation if, in the case of an administrative fine, the person responsible for transport or for slaughter continues to infringe one or more provisions of the legislation in force.
- To impose immediate administrative fine when it is ascertained that animals have been transported without the necessary permit or with an expired permit.

The following was noted:

- At the port of Patras previous inspection reports indicated that, although deficiencies had been detected, these were followed by oral warnings and never in writing, or by some form of sanction.
- At the BIP only oral warnings were given and cases were tolerated which involved serious suffering for the animals (Article 18(2) of Directive 91/628/EEC). No sanction has been imposed in these cases.

5.5. **Illegal movements of animals**

In response to a recommendation regarding co-operation with other enforcement bodies to prevent illegal movements of animals, the CCA indicated that four local CAs (Kilkis, Serres, Thesprotia and Achaia) had been instructed to carry out, as a pilot scheme, roadside checks with the Police. Other measures put in place by the CCA to prevent illegal movements of animals included:

- daily briefing via TRACES⁹ on arriving consignments of live animals;

⁸ Commission Decision of 12 November 1997 laying down certain detailed rules for the application of Council Directive 91/496/EEC as regards veterinary checks on live animals to be imported from third countries, OJ L 323, 26.11.1997, p. 31.

⁹ Trade Control and Expert System: application linking all Member States and which assists controls by allowing tracing of animal movements.

- targeted checks on all animals for slaughter to ascertain compliance with animal health and welfare provisions; in case of arrival to the slaughterhouse outside working hours, inspections to be carried out on the following day, while the person receiving the animals at the slaughterhouse has the obligation to inform the authorities of ascertained problems;
- where animals intended for slaughter are not brought to the slaughterhouse, the local CA shall impose immediate slaughter of the animals and impose a sanction to the person responsible;
- from 1.1.2006, the above inspections, their results and the actions taken shall be summarised on a monthly basis and sent every six months to the CCA.

In relation to the checks with the Police, the CA in Serres do not intend to put such a measure in place, the CA in Kilkis indicated that they do not have staff for such a scheme, while the CA in Thesprotia had organised checks twice but these were not performed due to other unanticipated priorities of the Police. The CA in Achaia indicated that they focus their checks on the port of Patras and do not need the assistance of the Police as vehicles are stopped by the Port Authority. The inspection team noted that the CCA's choice of regions to implement joint inspections with the Police may not have been the most appropriate, considering that report 9211/2003 had found illegal movements occurring in the middle of Greece and that the CCA had proposed checks with the Police to take place at places where consignments enter Greece, and where vehicles can already be stopped and checked without the support of the Police at ports and BIPs.

In relation to the other measures against illegal movements, 21 local CAs indicated that actions had been taken, while the remaining 33 local CAs did not reply to the CCA request. The following was noted:

- Five out of the seven local CAs visited had not replied to the CCA on the implementation of this action plan, even though there are significant livestock importers in Serres and Kilkis. In Laconia, the local CA had sent a letter to the CCA on problems found with slaughtering sheep outside the 72 hours permitted¹⁰, but the CCA had not been aware of this information.
- Two local CAs, who had replied, indicated that actions were being taken. Following an investigation by the CA of Karditsa, fines had been imposed on four transporters for violations of animal health legislation. At least one of these transporters had been involved in a previous unsuccessful proposal for sanctioning on this issue. A fine was also imposed by the CA of Trikala for one of the same transporters. It was still within the period for transporters to appeal against the fines imposed. The Directorate for Veterinary Inspection and Control of the

¹⁰ Article 4b(5) of Council Directive of 28 January 1991 on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in ovine and caprine animals, OJ L 46, 19.2.1991, p. 19.

CCA had audited a number of local CAs in relation to the illegal movements of animals in 2005, including Karditsa and Trikala.

5.6. Reporting

In response to the recommendation to ensure that all local CAs provide the results of transport inspections (Article 8 of Directive 91/628/EEC), the CCA reminded the local CAs to send a quarterly report as already requested on 9 April 2002.

- These summaries were available in four out of seven local CAs visited. Deficiencies such as lack of roof, inadequate drinking equipment, inadequate bedding were recorded in checklists or in logbooks kept at slaughterhouses, but these had not been included in the information sent to the CCA, which indicated that no deficiencies had been found.

5.7. Animal welfare at slaughter

In response to the recommendation to ensure that the requirements of Directive 93/119/EC are respected, the CCA gave a commitment that all slaughterhouses would be re-inspected and that a reference to animal welfare legislation would be included in the re-approval of the establishments. Also, that a further inspection would be carried out to verify the correction of shortcomings identified and a fine would be imposed in case of non compliance. These actions had been proposed following FVO missions in 2001 and in 2004 but the deadlines were repeatedly moved, with the result that this was to be eventually completed by 30.7.2005.

The CCA indicated that 38 out of 54 local CAs had re-inspected their slaughterhouses and that 14 local CAs had identified shortcomings in 29 establishments. One fine had been proposed by the CA of Evritania but rejected by the Prefect.

At the local CAs visited the following was noted:

- In Kilkis the local CA indicated that, due to staff shortages, slaughterhouses had not been re-inspected. At the slaughterhouse visited, major animal welfare deficiencies were noted, such as the ineffective stunning of bovine animals, insufficient maintenance and cleaning of the lairages, lack of maintenance of the stunning equipment for all species, a captive bolt pistol not working properly, out of order electrical equipment for stunning sheep and a suitable backup not available. Additionally, a recumbent cow was not killed within two hours of arriving at the slaughterhouse (point 6 of Annex A(I) to Directive 93/119/EC) and the pen in which she was kept was unsuitable, with an inadequate floor and without bedding and no drinking water provided (points 7 and 9 of Annex A(I) to Directive 93/119/EC)¹¹.

¹¹ *In their comments on a draft version of this report, the local authorities in Kilkis sent a letter with recommendations to the slaughterhouse visited, instructing it to take into account the inspection's findings and to take the necessary corrective action.*

- In Serres, only the approvals issued after 2002 met the CCA request. Re-inspections, however, had been carried out at the end of 2003 and a deadline for corrective actions had been set for January 2004; no follow-up inspections were documented. In one of the three slaughterhouses visited the sick pen was inadequate, with an uncovered manhole and watering devices out of order (points 7 and 9 of the Annex A(I) to Directive 93/119/EC). In another slaughterhouse the stunning equipment for small ruminants was inadequate (Annex C (II)(3)(A)(2) to Directive 93/119/EC). The same findings had also been included in a report by the CCA, which had been made in May 2005 following a request for approval of this establishment according to Article 10 of Directive 64/433/EEC¹². In a poultry slaughterhouse, major deficiencies included the rough shackling of birds and the inadequate space between the rail, onto which the birds were shackled, and the crates underneath, which made it impossible for the birds to avoid hitting their heads. The water in the stunning bath was overflowing, which is prohibited by Annex C (II)(3)(B)(4) to Directive 93/119/EC and which gave rise to pre-stunning shocks. The insufficient amperage used for stunning meant that the birds were ineffectively stunned. The official veterinarian indicated that higher currents gave rise to meat quality problems.
- The three slaughterhouses in Thesprotia had not been re-inspected and in the two visited a major problem included the level of ante-mortem and post-mortem checks. Records, kept by the slaughterhouse manager, had not been verified or annotated by the official veterinarian who stated that ante-mortem is not performed. This is in breach of Annex I, Chapter II (B), point 1(a) of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004¹³. Deficiencies, not detected by the CA included inadequate stunning of animals, inadequate stunning devices, lack of back-up devices, poor maintenance of lairages and lack of watering devices. At one establishment animals slaughtered on the weekend before Christmas had been recorded as slaughtered on the following Monday, as a formal permission had not been given by the CA for slaughtering outside normal working hours. The official veterinarian indicated that he would be paid directly by the owners of the animals for this service¹⁴. This compromises the requirements regarding conflict of interests (Article 4(2)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004).

¹² Council Directive 64/433/EEC of 26 June 1964 on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat. Repealed by Directive 2004/41/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 repealing certain Directives concerning food hygiene and health conditions for the production and placing on the market of certain products of animal origin intended for human consumption and amending Council Directives 89/662/EEC and 92/118/EEC and Council Decision 95/408/EC (OJ L 157, 30.4.2004), corrected and republished on OJ L 195 , 02.06.2004, p.12

¹³ Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption, corrected and republished on OJ L 226 , 25.06.2004, p. 83.

¹⁴ *In their comments on a draft version of this report, the local authorities in Thesprotia stated that the veterinarians have never accepted pay from the livestock keepers for weekend slaughtering.*

- In Messinia, re-approval had been given for the slaughterhouse visited. The re-inspection report indicated that certain issues could be improved. Improvements had already been made to the lairages and to the maintenance of the stunning equipment. Although it was not operating at the time of the visit, the problem with excessive stun to stick times remained, and plans were seen indicating that this would be corrected as part of major refurbishments. The only other issue pointed out by the inspection team was the need for an appropriate backup device where animals were electrically stunned (Article 6(2) of Directive 93/119/EC).
- In Laconia, the re-approvals had been given the week before the mission. The local CA indicated that they had waited so that they could incorporate requirements for animal by-products at the same time. The mission team were able to perform a limited evaluation of the facilities in two slaughterhouses, which were not operating as normal, but in which a demonstration slaughter of a small number of animals had been arranged. The animals were effectively stunned, but in one newly constructed slaughterhouse the stun to stick time for pigs was excessive (Annex D(1) to Directive 93/119/EC) the ammeter for the electrical stunning device was defective (Annex C (II)(3)(A)(2) to Directive 93/119/EC) and the maintenance of the captive bolt pistols was inadequate (Article 6(1) of Directive 93/119/EC). The problem with the stun to stick time and the lack of maintenance of the pistols had not been picked up by the CA.
- In Ilia, re-approval of slaughterhouses had been completed but the local CA had not sent the report, as requested in the action plan, to the CCA to inform them of this. At the visits, the slaughterhouses were not operating as normal, but a demonstration slaughter had been arranged. In one, three workers carried out restraint and stunning and the time from electrical stunning the goats to bleeding was c. 15 seconds. A previous inspection report, carried out when this slaughterhouse was operating normally, indicated that the same procedure would take a minute; such a stun to stick time would allow recovery prior to death. The inspection team also pointed out that the calibration of the ammeter did not effectively indicate the actual current flowing. In the other slaughterhouse, the demonstration slaughter of one bovine animal was adequately carried out.

5.8. Co-operation of the Greek Authorities with the Commission

Member States have the obligation to provide the experts from the Commission performing checks in their territory with the required assistance, in particular information and documentation as well as access to places, establishments, installations and means of transport (Article 45(5)(b) and (c) of Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004 and in general, Article 10 of the EC Treaty; furthermore, with regard to checks on animal protection at the time of slaughter – Article 14(3) of Directive 93/119/EEC). However certain difficulties were experienced by the FVO team:

- In Serres and at the BIP, officials were not co-operative in answering questions and at the BIP documentation was not provided on the spot as requested, although when it was requested in advance of the visit, the CA had given no indication that this would present a difficulty.

- In Iliia, individual official veterinarians when asked direct questions referring to the slaughterhouse within their responsibility were prevented by the Director of the Veterinary Service from giving a direct reply. There were some heated internal exchanges during the meeting which disrupted the conduct of the interviews, in particular when the issue of direct payment for services at slaughterhouses was raised.
- The information provided during the mission and concerning operating days and times for the BIP was incorrect and misleading. Prior to the visit the FVO had been informed by the CCA that BIPs were operating on a 24 hour basis seven days a week; this was not the case.
- The CCA provided information on the days of operation of four slaughterhouses in Laconia, which would have coincided with the visits by the inspection team, but this did not reflect the normal working days. At a meeting in the region, the local CA indicated that one of the four slaughterhouses was closed for refurbishment but that the other three would be operational. In fact none were in normal operation when visited, as one was also closed and the other two had arranged a demonstration slaughter of a small number of animals.
- The CCA provided information that there was one slaughterhouse in Messinia; the local CA indicated that there was a second smaller slaughterhouse.
- Regarding Thesprotia, the information provided during the current mission was contradictory to that provided during mission 9002/2003, when the inspection team had been informed that there were no operating slaughterhouses in this region¹⁵.
- In relation to access to transport, the letter from the FVO arranging this mission and sent on 13 December 2005, asked the CCA to assist with the transport arrangements for the inspection team. The mission team were led to believe that this was being taken care of; however, it became necessary, three working days before the mission, for the inspection team to make arrangements to transport themselves. This caused logistical difficulties and resulted in Messinia being visited instead of Arcadia.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Competent authority

- (1) Central level now benefits from having a second person to deal with animal transport issues.

¹⁵ *In their comments on a draft version of this report, the Greek Authorities indicated that in 2003 the Prefecture's slaughterhouses had been closed with a view to maintenance of the mechanical equipment and to carrying out other repairs. As a result of an inadvertent error the CCA had not been informed about its re-opening.*

- (2) At the local level, recent recruitments are not proceeding quickly enough to allow an adequate staffing level to be reached, and, at the moment, are just compensating for the rate of staff turnover.

6.2. Training

- (3) As there has been no training organised since the previous mission, the situation remains unchanged. The level and extent of the previous training has been insufficient, as several veterinarians met had no basic knowledge of the requirements. This corresponded to the regions where the worst problems were seen, which also indicates the lack of commitment to animal welfare issues by these local CAs.

6.3. Transporters' authorisation

- (1) The actions proposed by the CCA have been implemented in a limited and fragmented way. Although lists of transporters are now available, they are not always kept up to date and files do not contain all the information, such as the loading area requested by the CCA and the written undertaking to comply with requirements (Article 5(A)(1)(a)(ii) of Directive 91/628/EEC).
- (2) The CA has not ensured that transporters from Third Countries have a valid authorisation (Article 5(A)(1)(a)(ii) of Directive 91/628/EEC).

6.4. Transport checks

- (3) Even in the local CAs which did draw up a programme of inspections the checks did not meet the CCA target. Overall the CAs relied on checks at slaughterhouses or at times, such as when filling out movement documents, when checks were not particularly useful.
- (4) Some progress has been made in improving checks at the ports, but the lack of adequate facilities to perform more thorough checks, or to unload the animals in the vicinity of the port, contributes to non-compliance with the requirements of Directive 91/628/EEC. Also as checks at ports are not performed outside working hours, it is easy for a transporter to avoid being checked.
- (5) Controls at the BIP of Promachonas were inadequate as, although facilities are available to the CA, animals were not unloaded as required. Also unfit animals were allowed to continue to their final destination.
- (6) The failure to perform ante-mortem inspections at slaughterhouses in Thesprotia is a major failure in veterinary supervision, not only of animal welfare, but for reasons of animal and public health.
- (7) Controls on route plans were inadequate, and the CA has not ensured that transporters comply with their obligations concerning journey times and resting periods (Article 3(1)(aa) second indent of Directive 91/628/EEC).

- (8) The local CAs have not followed the request from the CCA regarding infringements. When detected, infringements are being followed by an oral warning, whereas this should be in writing and are not being reported to the higher levels of the CA, making impossible for the CCA to be aware of the real level of compliance.
- (9) Cases of transport of unfit animals have not been recognised as such by the veterinarians and as a consequence, sanctions were not imposed for these infringements as proposed in the CCA action plan.

6.5. Illegal movement of animals

- (10) The Directorate of inspection and control has given a greater focus to this issue in several local CAs. Although the CCA's choice of regions to implement joint inspections with the Police may not have been the most appropriate, in any case, the local CAs did not fulfil the request from the CCA to organise road-side checks with the Police. In relation to the other measures set by the CCA, the level of implementation was low.
- (11) Although some actions have been taken against the offenders who have repeatedly violated the legislation, it was not yet known if the fines would be paid.

6.6. Reporting

- (12) Half of the local CAs reported the results of transport checks, but this information was not accurate, as some reported inspections were in relation to movement control and not animal welfare, and on the other hand, detected infringements of the rules on animal welfare during transport were not being reported as required (Article 8 of Directive 91/628/EEC).

6.7. Animal welfare at slaughter

- (13) Despite several commitments from the CCA between 2001 and 2004, not all local CAs have performed the re-inspection and re-approval of slaughterhouses. Where slaughterhouses had been re-approved, some still presented major animal welfare problems, mainly where deficiencies had either not been detected or were being ignored.
- (14) Where shortcomings had been adequately recorded, actions had been mostly taken to correct these or works were planned to do this. However, there were some notable exceptions where, despite detection of the problem and establishment of deadlines for correction, these had not been made.
- (15) Direct payment by the owner of the animals to the veterinarian for providing inspection services at slaughterhouses outside working hours represents a conflict of interests which is in breach of Article 4(2)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

6.8. Co-operation of the Greek Authorities with the Commission

In relation to the co-operation provided by the CA, certain information provided to the FVO prior and during the mission was misleading in relation to the operation of certain slaughterhouses and in relation to the BIP. This, together with the conduct of some of the officials during several meetings, limited the evaluation of activities at these locations.

6.9. Overall conclusion

There has been little progress in the implementation of the actions proposed by the CCA. Although staffing levels are a problem, this does not account for the overall level of ineffectiveness of the control system. Apart from the limited effect produced by visits by the CCA's Inspection and Control Directorate, the CCA has been unable to ensure an overall effective and appropriate level of control, with certain local CAs continuing to give no priority to these issues. In relation to the transport of animals, the quality of the checks still remains insufficient. Even where deficiencies were detected, these have never been followed by written warnings or sanctions as indicated in the CCA action plan. Furthermore, deficiencies were not reported to the CCA, as required by EU legislation and as indicated in the CCA action plan. In relation to animal welfare at slaughter, there was a wide variation in standards and actions taken, with some local CAs providing a completely unacceptable level of control.

7. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 1 March 2006 with the CCA. At this meeting, the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. In relation to certain difficulties with co-operation during the mission, the Chief Veterinary Officer agreed that certain local CAs may have been trying to evade inspections. Although outside the scope of this mission, in relation to unacceptable standards of public health which were seen at certain slaughterhouses, another representative from the CCA indicated that the necessary action would be taken.

Following this mission, in response to a letter sent by the FVO, the CCA indicated that the authorisation of four slaughterhouses (three in Thesprotia and one in Serres) was suspended until correction of the public health deficiencies highlighted. Additionally, training on personal hygiene and stunning and slaughter was provided to the staff of the slaughterhouse in Serres.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Competent Authorities are requested to fully implement the action plan produced in response to report 7273/2004.

9. ADDENDUM TO MISSION REPORT DG(SANCO) 8042/2006

The CCA provided comments on a draft version of this report, which indicated that their Inspection and Control Directorate have increased the number of audits on the

topics of animal welfare during transport and at slaughter, because they deemed this to be a priority. The prefectural services visited made other remarks on their implementation of several points in the action plan and, where relevant, these have been incorporated into the text of this final report.