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Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/8331/2006 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN CROATIA
FROM 4 TO 8 DECEMBER 2006
TO REVIEW CONTROLS
CONCERNING ANIMAL WELFARE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report concerns certain findings from a mission carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in Croatia, from 4 to 8 December 2006.

These findings are in relation to the measures taken by the Croatian competent authorities to ensure that meat exported to the EU is obtained from animals which have been slaughtered under conditions which offer guarantees of humane treatment at least equivalent to those provided in Council Directive 93/119/EC.

The report concludes that the lack of training and guidance from the CCA on animal welfare at slaughter has contributed to inadequate controls in slaughterhouses. This resulted in inadequate stunning of poultry in a slaughterhouse which is approved for the export of meat to the EU, undermining the guarantees given by Croatia in respect of the protection of animals.

The report makes one recommendation addressed to the Croatian competent authorities, aimed at rectifying the identified shortcomings and further enhancing the implementing and control measures in place.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Croatia from 4 to 8 December 2006. The mission team comprised two inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), and was accompanied during the whole mission by a representative from the Central Competent Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Croatia, Veterinary Administration (*Ministarstvo poljoprivrede, šumarstva i vodnog gospodarstva, Uprava za veterinarstvo* - hereafter: CCA).

An opening meeting was held on 4 December 2006 with the CCA. At this meeting, the mission objective, itinerary, as well as the standard reporting and follow-up procedures were confirmed and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission was requested.

This report deals specifically with the findings of the mission team in relation to the commodities exported to the EU.

2. OBJECTIVE

For the purpose of this report, the objective was to evaluate control systems which have been put in place to ensure that meat exported to the EU is obtained from animals which have been slaughtered under conditions which offer guarantees of humane treatment at least equivalent to those provided in Council Directive 93/119/EC^{1, 2}.

3. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the provisions of Article 46 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004³.

4. BACKGROUND

This was the first mission to Croatia which was entirely dedicated to animal welfare requirements, although certain aspects of animal welfare had been evaluated in previous FVO missions.

Article 15 of Directive 93/119/EC requires that the health certificate accompanying meat exported to the EU from a third country must be supplemented by an attestation certifying that the animals have been slaughtered under conditions

¹ 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).

² Legal acts quoted in this report refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

³ Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 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 OJ L 165, 30.4.2004, p. 1 - corrected and republished in OJ L 191, 28.5.2004, p.1 (hereafter: Regulation (EC) No 882/2004).

offering guarantees of humane treatment at least equivalent to those provided for in the same Directive.

With regard to export of commodities to the EU, Croatia is included in the list of third countries from which poultry meat can be exported (Annex to Commission Decision 94/85/EC⁴). Commission Decision 94/984⁵ lays down the animal health conditions and veterinary certificates for the importation of fresh poultry meat from third countries. The model veterinary certificate for the export of poultry meat to the EU (Part 2 of Annex II to Decision 94/984/EC) includes an animal welfare attestation from the official veterinarian, indicating that the meat is obtained from animals that have been treated in accordance with the relevant provisions of Directive 93/119/EC in the slaughterhouse before and at the time of killing.

5. MAIN FINDINGS

5.1. Animal welfare at slaughter

Checks in slaughterhouses, including animal welfare, are carried out by authorised veterinarians (hereafter: AVs). Supervision of the AVs' work is performed by regional veterinary inspectors (hereafter: RVIs). It was noted that:

- The CCA had not yet issued any specific instruction, guidance or checklist concerning animal welfare requirements at slaughter.
- Apart from a two-day workshop and one-day seminars on animal welfare held in 2006, no specific training had been yet organised by the CCA for the AVs and RVIs.
- The AVs and RVIs met had not attended any animal welfare training, neither the seminars organised by the CCA. None of the slaughterhouse staff had received any training concerning animal welfare.

The CCA acknowledged that there is a general problem of lack of training for the AVs working in slaughterhouses.

⁴ Commission Decision 94/85/EC of 16 February 1994 drawing up a list of third countries from which the Member States authorize imports of fresh poultry meat, OJ L 44, 17.2.1994, p. 31 (hereafter: Decision 94/85/EC).

With effect from 26.04.2007, the above Decision is repealed and replaced by: Commission Decision 2006/696/EC of 28 August 2006 laying down a list of third countries from which poultry, hatching eggs, day-old chicks, meat of poultry, ratites and wild game-birds, eggs and egg products and specified pathogen-free eggs may be imported into and transit through the Community and the applicable veterinary certification conditions, and amending Decisions 93/342/EEC, 2000/585/EC and 2003/812/EC (hereafter: Decision 2006/696/EC).

⁵ Commission Decision 94/984/EC of 20 December 1994 laying down animal health conditions and veterinary certificates for the importation of fresh poultry meat from third countries, OJ L 378, 31.12.1994, p. 11 (hereafter: Decision 94/984/EC).

With effect from 26.04.2007, the above Decision is repealed and replaced by Decision 2006/696/EC.

In one turkey slaughterhouse visited, which is approved for the export to the EU, although the official veterinarians were generally knowledgeable regarding animal welfare questions, the following was noted:

- The strength and duration of the current for stunning in the water bath stunner had not been determined by the CA, contrary to the provisions of Annex C, Chapter II, point 3.B.1 to Directive 93/119/EC.
- Most of the turkeys received pre-stun shocks as their wings went into contact with the water before their heads were immersed, as a result of improper adjustment of the water bath. Annex C, Chapter II, point 3.B.4 to Directive 93/119/EC requires that water baths are adequate in size and length to the type of birds being slaughtered and Article 3 of the same Directive requires that animals are spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering.
- Wing flapping in turkeys started circa 30 sec after stunning and lasted for circa one minute, which indicates inadequate stunning. The current used for the water bath was five times lower than that recommended in a report from the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) on stunning and killing methods⁶. Additionally, the device for wetting the shackle to leg contact was switched off, which contributed to the poor stunning of the birds. Annex C, Chapter II, point 3.B.3 to Directive 93/119/EC requires that the shackle to leg contact is wetted in order to ensure that the current passes properly.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Animal welfare at slaughter

The lack of training and guidance from the CCA on animal welfare at slaughter has contributed to inadequate controls in slaughterhouses. Additionally, the strength and duration of the current used for stunning the birds in water-bath stunners was not determined by the CA as required by Annex C, Chapter II, point 3.B.1 to Directive 93/119/EC. This resulted in inadequate stunning of poultry in a slaughterhouse which is approved for the export of meat to the EU, undermining the guarantees given by Croatia in respect of the protection of animals.

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http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/science/ahaw/ahaw_opinions/495.Par.0002.File.dat/opinion_ahaw_02_ej45_stunning_report_v2_en1.pdf

7. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 8 December 2006 with the CCA. At this meeting the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The CCA provisionally accepted the findings and conclusions presented.

8. RECOMMENDATION

TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF CROATIA

Within 25 working days of receipt of the report, the Competent Authorities are requested to present a plan of actions, including a timetable for their completion, to address the following recommendation:

The CCA should ensure that measures are taken so that meat exported to the EU is obtained from animals which are slaughtered under conditions which offer guarantees of humane treatment at least equivalent to those provided for in Directive 93/119/EC.

9. COMPETENT AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATION

The competent authority's response to the recommendation can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ap/ap_croatia_8331_2006.pdf

ANNEX

Response of the Competent Authorities of Croatia to the recommendation of Mission report ref. DG (SANCO) 8331/2006 on animal welfare

Recommendation	Action proposed by the Competent Authority
The CCA should ensure that measures are taken so that meat exported to the EU is obtained from animals which are slaughtered under conditions which offer guarantees of humane treatment at least equivalent to those provided for in Directive 93/119/EC.	