

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2007 IN BRUSSELS
(Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain)
(Section Controls and Import Conditions)**

Chairmen: Eric Pondelet and Thomas Golden

All the Member States were present.

1. Imports of foodstuffs from China (JK)

Italy asked the Commission to outline the situation of imports of foodstuffs from China. Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase of RASFF notifications, in particular for products based on tomatoes. The Italian delegation wished to know the position of the Commission as regards the current situation.

The Commission explained that all RASFF notifications are being analysed and followed up very closely.

The analysis carried out in the summer had shown that there was a need to extend pre-export testing of fishery products to malachite green and crystal violet. The Commission intends to propose a Decision to extend pre-export testing for these 2 substances.

The analysis also showed that the levels of residues in honey do not constitute an important and immediate risk which would necessitate a safeguard measure. A clear message had however be sent to China on this issue.

The measure in place as regards aflatoxins in peanuts - 10% systematic sampling at the border - will be maintained pending a more specific analysis of the situation.

As regards the issue of migration of organic compounds from food contact material, a lot of notifications have been issued. China has sent an Action Plan in response to the recommendations of the report from the Food and Veterinary Office further to a mission to China last April. China has shown keenness to improve the situation in collaboration with the Commission.

In 2006 and 2007, 17 notifications have been issued on rice products containing the genetically modified strain "Bt63", in response to which China adopted a number of measures which seem to be effective.

Following the melamine incidents, China adopted pre-export testing of plant protein rich products, which seems to be effective. The Commission has recommended to China to introduce a good control system for all feed products. The Commission has offered to organise a seminar in Beijing to explain the EU control system for feed.

The Commission briefly reported on the latest discussions at high-level meetings between DG SANCO-AQSIQ, which took place on 10-12 September 2007. On the issue of illegal trade the Commission and China have agreed to closer cooperation and continue to reflect on possible actions. In order to optimise communication and cooperation, an EU-China RASFF notification IT system is being finalised. It will allow the Chinese authorities to search and download RASFF notifications and carry out the necessary investigations for all cases.

Italy reiterated its concerns about the quality problems encountered as regards imports of Chinese products and about the numerous RASFF notifications. France agreed with Italy and both suggested an enhanced system of controls since they considered no major improvement was to be expected in the near future. The French delegate circulated 2 samples he had brought along: 1 bag of salty dessert and 1 bag of dried beef, both containing banned products. He explained that they were coming from seized illicit products.

The Commission representative took note of the suggestion of France and Italy concerning the introduction of increased controls of imports of Chinese origin, which would be conveyed to SANCO hierarchy.

2. Discussion on a Canadian request for steam pasteurisation of carcasses (red meat) (NG)

In the framework of the review of the equivalence status of Canada, the Commission is examining the validity of steam pasteurisation method submitted by Canada. The Commission representative informed the committee on its investigations.

As requested by the Commission, Canada provided information on important issues in relation to compliance with EU norms.

Technical details were transmitted on 21 June 2007: time of steam application (10-15 seconds); steam temperature (85°C – 95°C); effect of organic quality (meat colour); immediate cooling process, room ventilation, use of potable water, ...

The Commission outlined the reactions received from several Member States.

Several Member States expressed a favourable view on the use of the steam pasteurisation method whereas others expressed concerns. For France and Italy such a steam treatment could reduce vigilance as regards hygiene practices. Austria requested that the EFSA looked into the issue so as to obtain a legal opinion. Italy exposed its interpretation of the scope of Regulations (EC) No 852/2004, 853/2007 and 854/2004. Moreover Italy questioned the status of steam as potable water.

Before deciding whether or not to accept the method, many MS stressed the need to go thoroughly into technical details in working group meetings and to examine all possible consequences, in particular on the quality of the meat.

The current Community legislation would have to be adjusted and discrimination between third countries and Member States be avoided.

The Commission agreed with the United Kingdom and Sweden that under the current legislation the technique could be valid only if used within a HACCP context (Hazard analysis and critical control point).

As suggested by the UK the Commission will ask the Canadian industry to provide data on the temperature of the meat surface, which may be different from the steam temperature.

As regards the action plan, working group meetings are to be organised and a fact-finding mission to Canada is to be launched by the Food and Veterinary Office, in which experts from the Member States are highly recommended to participate.

3. Information on proposed payments to be made to certain Member States in the framework of the 2006 TSE monitoring and eradication programmes (AW)

The Commission formally announced the proposed payments towards the 2006 TSE eradication and monitoring programmes to be made to Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

3A. Information on proposed payments to be reimbursed to certain Member States in the framework of the 2006 salmonella eradication programmes (AS)

The Commission formally announced the proposed payments towards the 2006 salmonella eradication programmes to be made to Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal and Slovakia. Payments for Denmark, Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands have been suspended on financial or technical matters.

Furthermore the Commission presented the payments for the 2006 eradication programmes for animal diseases. National authorities were asked to transmit their comments on the distributed payment table by the end of the week.

4. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the committee on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annex I to Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (Legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 – Right of scrutiny of the EP) (SANCO/1797/2006 Rev. 6) (AH) (See point 10 of 18 July 2007 SCFCAH)

A technical agreement was reached on this proposal on 18 July 2007. The SPS notification has not lead to any comment. The Commission outlined the amendments to be brought to a number of microbiological criteria in infant formula.

The Commission also assured the committee that the linguistic comments from the Member States on translations will be taken into consideration.

Vote: in favour at unanimity

5. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 as regards the approval of *Salmonella* control programmes in flocks of breeding hens of *Gallus gallus* in certain countries and amending Decision 2006/696/EC as regards certain public health requirements at import of certain poultry and hatching eggs (Legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 – Right of scrutiny of the EP) (SANCO/582/2007 Rev. 6) (KDS) (See point 3 of the 24 April 2007 SCFCAH)

A technical agreement was reached on this proposal on 24 April 2007.

This proposal intends to amend the list of third countries as regards conditions for import of certain poultry and hatching eggs. Four third countries have submitted *Salmonella* control programmes in flocks of breeding hens, which have been evaluated and approved by the Commission: Canada, Israel, Tunisia and the United States. These countries should be allowed for import.

Further to the discussions with the United States during the SPS consultation, the current proposal specifies that third countries should indicate on the certificate whether antimicrobials have been used in day-old chicks.

Animal health aspects will be taken into consideration by the relevant colleagues who will work on the basis of the current certificate.

In reply to the concerns of France on antibiotic resistance, the Commission informed the committee that the European Food Safety Authority is making an assessment on antimicrobial resistance and will issue its report early 2008.

Vote: in favour at unanimity

6. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the committee on a draft Commission Decision approving programmes which qualify for a Community financial contribution for the eradication and monitoring of animal diseases, of certain TSEs and zoonoses, presented by the Member States for 2008 and following years (SANCO/10381/2007) (VP)

Following the evaluation of annual and multi-annual programmes for the eradication and monitoring of animal diseases submitted by the Member States, 70 animal disease eradication and monitoring programmes, 38 programmes for the control of zoonoses, 27 TSEs monitoring programmes, 20 BSE eradication programmes, 24 scrapie eradication programmes and 26 Avian Influenza survey programmes qualified for a financial contribution in accordance with Article 24 (5) of Council Decisions 90/424/EEC.

The Commission asked the Member States to send in their comments by the end of the week and stressed that requests should be realistic to the need so as to avoid funding reallocation as much as possible.

It is intended to take a vote on this proposal at the 6-7 November 2007 SCFCAH, Animal Health section.

7. Exchange of views of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision concerning a financial contribution from the Community towards a survey on the prevalence of methicilline-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* in herds of breeding pigs to be carried out in the Member States (Legal basis: Council Decision 90/424/EEC) (SANCO/3100/2007) (SI/KDS)

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections represent a very important risk in hospitals since a long time. A new strain of MRSA (ST398) has been recently detected in production animals in Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Belgium. In particular, pigs have been recognised as an important source of infection for humans. Infection with the new strain may enter hospitals by the hospitalisation of the farmer or his relatives.

Taking into account the public health significance of MRSA, the emerging risk of pigs as source of infection for humans and the lack of comparable information on the prevalence of MRSA in herds of pigs in different Member States, additional sampling during the survey on *Salmonella* (under Commission Decision 2007/636/EC) should be carried out in order to evaluate the prevalence of MRSA in herds of breeding pigs in all Member States.

The survey is to provide technical information necessary for the development of Community veterinary legislation. Given the importance of collecting comparable data on the prevalence of MRSA in breeding pigs in the Member States, they should be granted a Community financial contribution for implementing the specific requirements of the survey. It is appropriate to reimburse 100% of the costs incurred on the laboratory testing, subject to a ceiling.

For reason of simplicity Decision 2007/636/EC should be repealed but its provisions should be included in the current Decision, which should apply as from 1 January 2008.

The technical specifications for the survey provided for in this Decision will be based on the EFSA report on the technical specifications for a survey on the prevalence of MRSA in herds of breeding pigs, to be adopted on 19 November 2007 (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178662632875.htm). A large number of Member States expressed their favourable position on the proposal. Spain and Austria were concerned that this was a human health issue to be dealt with by the health authorities. The Commission clarified that since transmission to human beings is through contact with pigs the proposal does fall under the scope of the zoonoses monitoring Directive. There is no evidence for the moment that it is a zoonosis transmitted by food.

The Commission asked the committee to express their position by the end of the week. It is intended to put the proposal to the vote at the 20 November 2007 SCFCAH, Animal Health section.

8. Miscellaneous / Divers

Draft Commission Regulation amending Annex VII to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain TSEs (SANCO/3198/2007)

On 28 September 2007 the Court of 1st Instance has delivered a judgement requesting the cancellation of the Scrapie Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 727/2007). Until the final judgement is taken, the Commission wishes to propose a draft Regulation to address the situation in Cyprus where a high prevalence exists. The proposal will be presented for vote at the 22 October 2007 SCFCAH, Animal Nutrition section.

France requested some clarification on the issue of listeria for ready-to-eat products placed on the market, for which a framework is set in the microbiological criteria Regulation. This issue will be put on the agenda of the next SCFCAH.

Germany reminded the Commission of its request to review the German version of Regulations (EC) No 832 and 852. Linguistic problems have indeed led to difficulties in implementation. The Commission will inform Germany on the status of concerned linguistic corrigenda procedure.

(signed)
Eric Poudelet
Acting Director

N.B. The proposals on which the Committee expressed an opinion are subject to a defined procedure in relation to the formal adoption by the Commission.