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FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT

CARRIED OUT IN

FRANCE

FROM 11 TO 20 JUNE 2013

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE FOOD SAFETY CONTROL SYSTEMS IN PLACE
GOVERNING THE PRODUCTION AND PLACING ON THE MARKET OF POULTRY MEAT
AND PRODUCTS DERIVED THEREFROM

Executive Summary

This report describes the outcome of a Food and Veterinary Office audit in France, which took place from 11 to 20 June 2013.

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the organisation of the CAs and the implementation of national provisions, against which they control poultry meat and products derived therefrom is compliant with the EU requirements.

The report concludes that there is a system of official controls on poultry meat and products derived therefrom, which includes regular and risk based controls with documented procedures in place.

Although since the last poultry meat sector audit to France in 2008 some improvement was noted by the audit team, there are still serious deficiencies in ante and post-mortem inspection, and national implementing rules significantly differ from current European Union legislation.

In addition effectiveness of the system of official controls is compromised by deficiencies detected by the audit team and not by the Competent Authority, in particular deficiencies regarding animal welfare conditions at the time of birds' slaughter.

For the deficiencies identified by the Competent Authority during official controls (e.g. in Food Business Operator own checks, animal welfare, regarding maintenance and hygienic practices in establishments) the corrective actions to remedy the situation are not always adequately followed up and effectively enforced.

The report includes a number of recommendations addressed to the central competent authority, aimed at rectifying the identified shortcomings and deficiencies and enhancing the implementation of the official control system in place.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
CA / CCA	Competent Authority / Central Competent Authority
DGAL	Directorate General for Food
DGCCRF	Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Repression
ENSV	Veterinarian Services National School
EU	European Union
FBO	Food Business Operator
FCI	Food Chain Information
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HACCP	Hazard Analysis – Critical Control Points
INFOMA	National Institute of the training of the Ministry of Agriculture staff
MAAF	Ministry of Agriculture, Agri-food and Forestry (Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt)
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
COFRAC	French Accreditation Body

1 INTRODUCTION

The audit took place in France from 11 to 20 June 2013 and was undertaken as part of the Food and Veterinary Office's (FVO) planned audit programme.

The audit team comprised of two auditors from the FVO. Representatives from the competent authority (CA) accompanied the team during the whole audit.

An opening meeting was held on 11 June 2013 with the Central CA (CCA). At this meeting the audit team confirmed the objectives of, and itinerary for the audit, and requested additional information required for its satisfactory completion.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the organisation of the CAs and the implementation of national provisions, against which they control poultry meat and products derived therefrom is compliant with the EU requirements.

The table below lists the sites visited and the meetings held in order to achieve the above objective:

Competent authority		
CCA	1	Opening and closing meetings
Laboratories		
Official	1	
Primary production		
Farm	1	
Food processing facilities		
Slaughterhouses	4	
Cutting plants	4	Attached to slaughterhouses
Meat preparation establishments	2	Attached to slaughterhouses
Meat products establishments	2	One attached to a slaughterhouse

3 LEGAL BASIS

The audit was carried out under the general provisions of EU legislation and, in particular Article 45 of 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.

A full list of the EU legal instruments referred to in this report is provided in the Annex and refers, where applicable, to the last amended version.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 PREVIOUS FVO AUDIT

The most recent poultry sector audit to France prior to the current one, took place in 2008 which

highlighted deficiencies in relation to ante and post-mortem inspection. The report of the 2008 audit is available on the EU website at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ir_search_en.cfm.

Written guarantees have been received from the CA in relation to the implementation of those recommendations.

4.2 PRODUCTION AND TRADE INFORMATION

The audit team was informed by the CCA that French production of poultry was assessed to be 1,864,400 tons in 2011.

The table below details poultry meat produced in France and put on the market of other countries of the European Union in 2011 (data provided by the CCA).

Type of product	Quantity in tons for 2011	
	fresh	frozen
Meat of chicken	57.40	46.40
Meat of turkey	33.00	36.40
Duck and goose liver	1,057.00	1,164.00

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTING MEASURES

Legal requirements

Article 4.2 (e) and Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Articles 1 (3) (d), 1 (4) and 10 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

Findings

A comprehensive review of French legislation was not carried out as a part of this audit.

The audit team was informed by the CCA that for the poultry sector, the CAs follow the relevant EU and national legislation.

Directorate General for Food (DGAL) issued several guidance documents and "Note de service" (Official instruction) related to the official controls of foodstuffs and also related specifically to the poultry sector.

The audit team noted that national legislation is in place for producers supplying small quantities of meat from poultry and lagomorphs slaughtered on farm directly to the final consumer or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer (based on Article 1 point 3 (d) and point 4 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004) such as:

- Decree ("Décret") No 2008-1054 of 10 October 2008 concerning the non-approved slaughterhouses of poultry and lagomorphs (Décret n° 2008-1054 du 10 octobre 2008 relatif aux établissements d'abattage de volailles et de lagomorphes non agréés).
- Decree ("Arrêté ministériel") of October 10, 2008 adopted for the application of Articles D. 654-3 to D. 654-5 of the Rural Code and on sanitary rules concerning the non-approved slaughterhouses of poultry and lagomorphs (Arrêté du 10 octobre 2008 pris pour l'application des articles D. 654-3 à D. 654-5 du code rural et relatif aux règles sanitaires applicables aux établissements d'abattage de volailles et de lagomorphes non agréés) and

implementing rules issued by the CCA as Service note DGAL/SDSSA/N2008-8282.

In application of Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, the following national legislation was published:

- Decree ("Décret") No. 2009-1601 of 18 December 2009 on the controlled designation of origin « Volaille de Bresse » ou « Poulet de Bresse », « Poularde de Bresse », « Chapon de Bresse » (Décret n° 2009-1601 du 18 décembre 2009 relatif à l'appellation d'origine contrôlée « Volaille de Bresse » ou « Poulet de Bresse », « Poularde de Bresse », « Chapon de Bresse »).
- Decree ("Arrêté ministériel") of 20 May 2009 concerning sanitary rule derogations applicable to products and feed of animal origin presenting traditional characteristics (Arrêté du 20 mai 2009 relatif aux dérogations à certaines règles sanitaires applicables aux produits d'origine animale et aux denrées alimentaires en contenant présentant des caractéristiques traditionnelles).

Several implementing rules were drafted as official instructions ("Notes de service"):

- DGAL/SDSSA/N2007-8171, concerning application file for poultry production wishing to be recognised as traditional production (Dossier de demande de reconnaissance de certaines productions avicoles au titre des méthodes traditionnelles).
- DGAL/SDSSA/N2007-N°771, concerning adaptation to the EU requirements defined in the hygiene package (Adaptations aux exigences communautaires définies par le Paquet Hygiène).
- DGAL/SDSSA/L2008-N°0659, concerning the implementation of the hygiene package in fat-duck production. Particularity of establishments supplying collective cutting plants (Mise en oeuvre du paquet Hygiène dans la filière palmipèdes gras. Cas particulier des établissements livrant les ateliers de découpe collectifs (centres de regroupement)).
- DGAL/SDSSA/N2009-8193, concerning the upgrading of poultry and lagomorphs slaughterhouses having local/regional or national approval to EU standards: elements of flexibility (Mises aux normes communautaires des abattoirs de volailles et de lagomorphes disposant d'un agrément loco-régional ou national : éléments de flexibilité).

The national legislation has been notified to the Commission and Member States.

National implementing rules governing ante and post-mortem inspection in poultry slaughterhouses significantly differ from the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 854/2004. The main discrepancies are as follow:

- Ante-mortem inspection is carried out at slaughterhouse level by the Food Business Operator (FBO) staff and not by an official veterinarian as required under EU legislation.
- Post-mortem inspection in poultry slaughterhouses is not supervised by an official veterinarian as required under EU legislation.
- An official veterinarian does not personally carry out the official checks required under point 1 Part B Chapter V Section IV Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.
- Results of ante and post-mortem inspection are not routinely received and kept by the CA. (in contravention to point 1 Chapter I Section II Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004).

(For more see section 5.3.3 on Ante-mortem and Post-mortem inspection).

The audit team noted that the Rural and Maritime Fisheries Code ("Code rural et de la pêche maritime") and the Consumer Code ("Code de la consommation") confer DGAL staff (at central,

regional and local levels) powers to carry out controls, enter premises, obtain information, take samples and to take enforcement measures.

Conclusions

National measures adapting the requirements of Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and those concerning producers supplying small quantities of meat from poultry and lagomorphs slaughtered on farm directly to the final consumer or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer are in place and have been notified to the Commission and Member States.

National implementing rules governing ante and post-mortem inspection in poultry slaughterhouses significantly differ from the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

5.2 COMPETENT AUTHORITY

Legal requirements

Article 4, 6 and 8 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Section III of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, in particular Chapters III and IV.

Findings

The CCA for controls of poultry meat and products derived therefrom is DGAL under the Ministry of Agriculture, Agri-Food and Forestry (MAAF). Amongst other things, the CCA is responsible for transposition of relevant EU legislation and for co-ordination of supervision of approved food establishments. The CCA provides official staff with instructions ("Notes de service"), harmonised checklists and general and sector inspection guidelines (vade mecum - handbooks).

The "Direction Générale de la Concurrence, de la Consommation et de la Répression des Fraudes" (Directorate General for Competition, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Repression – DGCCRF) under the Ministry of Economy and Finance is responsible for official controls over food labelling, its ingredients and for the product description on invoices issued by FBOs.

Official controls at Departmental (local) level are implemented by the Departmental Directorates. The Directorates names depend on the organisation of the administrative services at "département" level: Departmental Directorate for the protection of the population, or Departmental Directorate for social cohesion and protection of the population. These directorates are under the co-ordination of the regional authority (Regional Directorates of Food and Feed, Agriculture and Forestry for DGAL staff and Regional Directorates for Enterprise, Competition, Consumers and Employment for DGCCRF staff).

There is a direct chain of command between central and departmental level.

The audit team was informed by the CCA that DGAL's systems for official controls have been accredited to ISO 17020 since March 2010.

The system of official controls over the production chain of poultry meat and products derived therefrom is the same as for all other food of animal origin. A description of the control systems can be found in the country profile for France which is accessible at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country_profiles_en.cfm.

The CCA informed the audit team that at Regional and Department level there are "référénts nationaux". These national reference points provide a bridge between officers in the field and the central administration. They bring expertise to the local enterprises, carry out audits in some

establishments (focusing on ones with higher risk) and contribute to the development of training and the preparation of documented procedures (vade mecum, instructions).

The staffing levels are described in the country profile. The CCA provided the audit team with more detailed information on the number of official staff involved in official controls in the poultry sector. Currently there are 166 full time employees; of them 1/3 are official veterinarians and the rest official auxiliaries.

The presence of an official veterinarian and official auxiliaries in poultry slaughterhouses depends on the volume of production. Only the largest slaughterhouses with more than 30,000 tonnes of meat produced per year are subject to permanent supervision by official veterinarian and official auxiliaries. However in neither of two large slaughterhouses visited was the official veterinarian permanently present on-site during slaughter: in one case the official veterinarian was on site 1-2 days per week and in the other, the official veterinarian was daily on site but only for 1/3 of the working day.

In one slaughterhouse visited, with volume production between 15,000 tonnes and 30,000 tonnes, the official veterinarian was present on site 1-2 days per week.

The audit team noted a daily presence of official auxiliaries in all three above mentioned slaughterhouses visited. However their working shifts did not match with working hours in the slaughterhouse and therefore they were not permanently present in the slaughterhouse during the slaughter of all birds.

In one slaughterhouse visited with production capacity of 10,000 tonnes per year, the audit team noted that official auxiliaries were present on the site once per week. In addition the supervision in the establishment was carried out by a "vétérinaire vacataire" (a private veterinarian contracted by the local CA to carry out specific official tasks). His main duties were to carry out supervision, intervene in case of alerts and take decisions if needed. Frequency of his visits on-site were generally once per week.

The audit team confirmed that in farms and establishments visited the CA had access to premises and to documentation kept by the FBO.

Training

Official veterinarians and official auxiliaries are trained initially when they join and all along their careers based on training courses organised by two bodies of MAAF: the Veterinarian Services National School (ENSV) (<http://www.ensv.fr/>) for the official veterinarians and the National Institute of the training of MAAF (INFOMA) (<http://infoma.agriculture.gouv.fr/>) for the official auxiliaries.

In addition, local training sessions complement the official training courses on specific themes and are delivered by the national reference points.

The CCA develops the priority areas of training for staff based on the demands expressed by its sub-directorates and the needs identified following evaluations of previous training sessions.

The CCA briefed the audit team on various training courses provided to the CA staff.

The training for CA staff in 2011, 2012 and the beginning of 2013 included topics such as INFOMA continuing education: "Inspection in poultry and lagomorphs slaughterhouses" (in March 2013), ENSV continuing education: "Official veterinarians in poultry and lagomorphs slaughterhouses" (annual training), Practical exchanges: "Inspection in poultry small slaughterhouses" (from 07/02/2013 to 18/04/2013) and Formco-INFOMA: "Technologies and regulations on meat products" (four days training).

Evidence of attendance at these training sessions was available to the audit team.

The audit team noted that the CCA is responsible for authorising training centres for FBO staff involved in ante and post-mortem inspection. Training centres must respect the CCA training specifications such as requirements for theoretical and practical training for ante and post-mortem inspection. In slaughterhouses visited, the FBO staff was trained for both ante and post-mortem inspection. However for ante-mortem inspection only one day's training was provided.

Although in establishments visited the CA and FBO staff provided evidence of participation in different training sessions, significant deficiencies were noted by the audit team in ante and post-mortem inspection and in the protection of birds at the time of slaughter (see section 5.3.4 on Animal welfare at slaughter).

Verification and internal audits

The CCA internal audit arrangements, based on requirement of Article 4(6) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004, are formalised in written procedures and are performed at central, regional and local level.

A description of verification and internal audits can be found in the country profile for France which is accessible at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/country_profiles_en.cfm.

The FVO audit team noted that technical internal audits in the poultry meat and products sector have not yet been performed.

In addition to internal audits, supervision of inspections takes place in line with ISO/IEC 17020 (as a part of quality management system). It comprises documentation review and on site visits. The procedures are set out in a national quality plan document. Evidence of supervision at departmental level was provided to the audit team.

Conclusions

The CAs responsible for official controls in the scope of the audit have been designated.

Taking into account the number of CA staff available and the size of the French poultry meat/poultry meat product sector and based on evidence regarding the limited presence of official veterinarians and official auxiliaries on sites visited, there is currently not sufficient official supervision to carry out the controls required under Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 Annex I with the frequency specified in Section III, Chapter II of the same regulation.

While training courses for CA and FBO staff involved in ante and post-mortem inspection are organised, insufficient knowledge of important EU requirements was noted, in particular as regards ante and post-mortem inspection and protection of birds at the time of slaughter.

Tools are available to the CAs to verify the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls at establishment level.

Technical internal audits in the food sector been carried out. However, none have been done yet concerning poultry.

5.3 OFFICIAL CONTROLS OF PRODUCTION AND PLACING ON THE MARKET

5.3.1 Controls at farm level

Legal requirements

Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.
Art. 4 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

Findings

The CCA informed the audit team that all poultry farms with more than 250 poultry have to be notified to the departmental authorities. The farms are registered and FBOs receive for each poultry house a unique national identification code (INUAV).

The data thus collected are registered in the national data system (SIGAL).

The audit team visited one broiler farm that supplies birds to a slaughterhouse also visited by the team. The farm was registered. The FBO records were properly kept and were available. The flock records included, among other things, information on number of birds per house, daily mortality, feed and water consumption, use of veterinary medicines (date of administration and withdrawal period) and vaccination. A pest control programme was in place. The food chain information (FCI) reviewed by the audit team contained information on the *Salmonella* test results carried out in line with EU requirements.

The farm visited was maintained in adequate conditions and applied satisfactory biosecurity measures.

In 2011 official sampling for *Salmonella* under the *Salmonella* National Control Programme for broilers was carried out on the farm with compliant result. According to the CA, the official controls on broiler farms may be carried out as part of animal welfare/ cross-compliance/ feed control checks and residue monitoring. Official controls to verify FBO compliance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 are carried out as part of cross-compliance checks. However a frequency of these checks is 1% of all farms per year. No official control on compliance with requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 had been carried out yet on the farm visited by the audit team.

Conclusions

Poultry farms are registered. Official controls on the poultry farms to verify FBO compliance with provisions in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 are regularly carried out within cross-compliance checks; however, the frequency of these checks is low and not appropriate.

5.3.2 Approval procedures

Legal requirements

Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004
Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004
Article 31 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Findings

General criteria and administrative procedures used by the CAs for the approval of establishments are laid down in an official instruction (Note de service DGAL/SDSSA/N2007-8014).

In addition, specific legal texts detailing the approval particularities relating to the different type of establishments exist, such as:

- For slaughterhouses: “Arrêté ministériel” of 8 June 2006, concerning the sanitary approval of establishments producing products or feed of animal origin (Arrêté du 8 juin 2006 relatif

à l'agrément sanitaire des établissements mettant sur le marché des produits d'origine animale ou des denrées contenant des produits d'origine animale) and official instruction DGAL/SDSSA/N2012-8119, concerning approval procedures and composition of approval file (Note de service concernant la procédure d'agrément et la composition du dossier d'agrément)

- For cutting plants, meat product establishments and cold stores: official instruction DGAL/SDSSA/N2011-8153, concerning meat production in approved establishments (Note de service concernant la production de produits à base de viande dans les établissements agréés ou dérogatoires à l'agrément).

According to the system in place for approval of establishments, FBOs have to submit an application to the CA at departmental level which should contain, inter alia, a description of the activities, blue print, sanitary management plan and Hazard Analysis – Critical Control Points (HACCP) plan. Following assessment and an initial inspection, the establishment may be given conditional approval for a period of up to three months. This conditional approval can be extended for a further three months if need be. Final approval is granted following an on-site inspection where all conditions of food law are verified including an effective system based on HACCP principles.

All establishments visited were approved by the CA for activities carried out on-site and the approval documents were available to the audit team.

All approved establishments are included in an electronic database (SIGAL) and published on the MAAF website.

Conclusions

Establishment approval procedures are in place and in general are well implemented.

5.3.3 Ante-mortem and Post-mortem inspection

Legal requirements

Article 4 and 5 of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

Findings

Ante-mortem inspection

The CCA informed the audit team that ante-mortem inspection is performed at slaughterhouse level. That was the case for all slaughterhouses visited.

In the slaughterhouses visited the audit team noted that the ante-mortem inspection was carried out by the FBO staff and not by an official veterinarian as required under EU legislation.

The ante-mortem inspection consisted of:

- Documentary check (including examination of the FCI);
- Identification of the consignment of birds;
- Animal welfare check;
- Clinical inspection of birds.

In 2008 the CA revised criteria against which the birds and carcasses should be assessed by the FBO during post-mortem inspection. In 2009 the CA implemented a system to standardise criteria of alerts for checks on FCI, ante and post-mortem inspection by the FBO (revised in July 2012 by

instruction DGAL/SDSSA/N2012-8167). If certain values for these criteria are reached, then CA staff should be alerted and take a decision, if needed. However, some deficiencies in the implementation of this system were noted by the audit team, for example:

- In one slaughterhouse visited the revised system had not yet been implemented;
- An FBO misinterpreted certain criteria for ante-mortem inspection and only the first truck with birds from the same farm/batch was subjected to ante-mortem inspection;
- In some instances slaughter was carried out before the receipt of an official veterinarian decision.

The audit team observed in the sites visited that the birds sent to slaughterhouses were accompanied by FCI signed by the farmer.

In addition to FBO checks, the audit team noted that official auxiliaries in the slaughterhouses visited regularly check FCI and randomly check some batches of live birds; however, no records on these checks are kept and not all trucks/batches with live birds are checked by the CA staff. Furthermore, the audit team noted that the check in respect of the withdrawal period for veterinary medicinal products relies only on FCI statements and did not include verification of length of this period against values in the legislation.

Competency tests to assess the performance of FBO staff carrying out ante-mortem inspection are part of the national provisions but have not yet been carried out.

The CCA informed the audit team about two short check lists that have been drafted for CA official evaluation of ante-mortem inspection (including evaluation of FCI) carried out by the FBO. These two mini grids are envisaged to be implemented from July 2013.

Post-mortem inspection

The CCA informed the audit team that FBO staff involved in post-mortem inspection is:

- Trained by training centres officially authorised by MAAF (instruction DGAL/SDSSA/N2013-8028);
- Under the control, authority and responsibility of the official services (“Arrêté” of the 30th of December 2011, concerning the slaughterhouse staff participation in the control of the poultry and lagomorphs meat production);
- Periodically assessed to guarantee the quality of meat inspection.

In the slaughterhouses visited the audit team noted that post-mortem inspection is carried out by FBO staff. However, inspection is not supervised by the official veterinarian as required under EU legislation; in particular the official veterinarian is not present at ante-mortem and post-mortem examinations and does not supervise these activities. The official veterinarian does not personally carry out official checks required under point 1 Part B Chapter V Section IV Annex I of Reg. 854/2004, in particular daily inspection of the viscera and body cavities of a representative sample of birds and a detailed inspection of a random sample, from each batch of birds having the same origin, of parts of birds or entire birds declared unfit for human consumption following post-mortem inspection.

The audit team noted that since 2012 the CA has implemented a system of evaluation tests (competency tests) carried out at a frequency set by the CCA. The objective of these tests is to evaluate the performance of FBO staff (global and individual) involved in post-mortem inspection. However, in one slaughterhouse visited, these competency tests have not been carried out yet. In another slaughterhouse visited, unsatisfactory results in five consecutive evaluation tests carried out since 2012 were noted on a slaughter line for turkeys. Although requested by the official

veterinarian, no adequate corrective actions were taken by the FBO to improve performance of slaughterhouse staff involved in this inspection.

In two slaughterhouses visited the audit team noted that post-mortem inspection was carried out only before evisceration and did not include checks on birds' cavities and accompanying offal. Post-mortem inspection applied in this slaughterhouse did not meet requirements under EU legislation.

In two other slaughterhouses visited, the design of the slaughter line did not allow the carrying out of post-mortem inspection on carcasses and accompanying (corresponding) offal as required under EU legislation. Carcasses were checked separately; however no facilities (e.g. mirrors) were available to allow a check of all external surfaces. In one of these two slaughterhouses, collected livers and gizzards were checked after evisceration in a separate room; however these checks were carried out as part of quality production check and not as part of post-mortem inspection. Furthermore the other offal such as intestines was not checked at all (after evisceration it was immediately discarded).

In another slaughterhouse visited, a designated inspection point was not adequately fit for purpose (mirror too close to the broiler slaughter line, line speed too fast preventing proper inspection of both carcasses and offal). In addition, in the same facility, staff involved in post-mortem inspection on turkey slaughter line carried out other tasks (evisceration, cutting wings). Although detected by the official veterinarian who requested corrective actions, this deficiency had not been addressed at the time of the FVO audit.

The audit team noted that FBO staff keep records on results of ante and post-mortem inspection and these results are routinely sent back to the farm of bird's origin. However the CA staff in the slaughterhouses visited did not receive and keep these records.

Conclusions

Although since the last poultry meat sector audit to France in 2008 some improvement was noted by the audit team (e.g. implementation of CCA instructions on participation of FBO staff in ante and post-mortem inspection, on competency tests to assess post-mortem inspection, etc), ante and post-mortem inspections are still far from compliant with EU requirements.

5.3.4 Animal welfare at slaughter

Legal requirements

Articles 3, 4 and 5 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009.

Findings

The CCA informed the audit team on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 in France:

- A guide to good practice has been developed to facilitate implementation of standard operating procedures in poultry slaughterhouses with the envisaged date of adoption in September 2013.
- Detailed check lists for thematic inspections regarding animal welfare at the time of slaughter have been drafted with an envisaged date of implementation at the end of summer 2013. The check lists will cover aspects such as standard operating procedures in slaughterhouses, checks on stunning, etc.
- Specific training for official staff on the new inspection regime and inspection procedures on animal welfare is envisaged in 2014.

The audit team noted that since February 2013 one training provider has been authorised by the CCA to train poultry slaughterhouse staff on animal welfare issues. After training the staff must sit an online test and if passed, the local CA issues a certificate of competence as is required under EU legislation.

The CCA informed the audit team that manufacturer's instructions for the use of restraining and stunning equipment have been collected and a list of them is being established and soon will be publicly available on the internet.

In all slaughterhouses visited, incorrect stunning parameters were applied and as a consequence the audit team noted the presence of numerous birds on the slaughter line after stunning with signs of consciousness (corneal reflex, rhythmic breathing, extensive wing flapping, even head lifting). Although records of FBO monitoring on stunning were available they did not include any deficiencies in stunning or problems regarding loss of consciousness by birds.

Of the four slaughterhouses visited, the minimum stunning parameter values required by Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 were met in only one line of one slaughterhouse [with gas stunning method]. In three slaughterhouses visited practising Halal slaughter, the audit team noted that birds had been stunned before bleeding. However values of stunning parameters applied were inadequate and thus birds were only immobilised before bleeding and not sufficiently stunned. This practice is not in line with Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009.

In one slaughterhouse visited the audit team noted that FBO checks on stunning were carried out after bleeding before birds entered scalding machine and not immediately after stunning. Although the CA detected and recorded this deficiency in one of the official reports in 2012, the FBO instructions had not been amended at the time of the FVO visit.

Despite FBOs providing evidence of their participation in different animal welfare training courses, including one provided by the authorised training centre, deficiencies were detected by the audit team in all slaughterhouses visited.

Conclusions

Effectiveness of the system of official controls on animal welfare conditions at the time of slaughter is compromised by numerous deficiencies detected by the audit team and which had not previously been recorded or reported by the CA.

Deficiencies reported by the CA were not properly corrected.

5.3.5 Controls at establishment level

Legal requirements

Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

Article 54 and 55 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008.

Findings

France has established a risk-based system for official controls in line with the requirements of Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

The inspection frequency takes into account:

- The identified risks related to foodstuffs, processes, materials, operations, etc;

- The past performance of FBOs;
- The reliability of own-checks carried out by FBOs;
- The results of audits.

Food processing establishments are divided into three groups based on priorities, namely prevention, improvement and suppression (keeping under control). The prevention group covers approved establishments and all establishments with high risk (category IV). The control frequency for this group is fixed at central level as a minimum frequency. For establishments category IV (with high risk) the minimum frequency is set at two inspections per year, for category III one inspection per year and for categories I and II one inspection every three years. For the establishments in improvement and suppression group the frequency of the inspections is decided by the local CA under the coordination of the regional authority.

Risk is calculated taking into account:

- The theoretical site-specific risk linked to the activity;
- Production volume;
- Consumers sensitivity;
- An overall assessment of an establishment by an inspector following an inspection (partial or total) carried out with the inspection grid.

Based on these factors the establishments receive a numeric risk score, which determines the risk class (from I to IV) and thus the basic minimum inspection frequency.

Slaughterhouses are classified according to their degree of conformity based on the results of the annual classification inspection which has been used to determine their inspection frequency. The minimum inspection frequency is determined on a national level for these types of establishments (at least one comprehensive inspection per year).

According to the CCA, out of 690 approved slaughterhouses, 31 belong to class III, 560 to class II and 99 to class I. It should be noted that the number of slaughterhouses classified in category III and IV has decreased since the previous FVO audit in 2008, with zero establishments in class IV and a decrease from 29% to 3.96% for slaughterhouses in class III. However the audit team noted that the same two large slaughterhouses (with production between 15,000 and 30,000 tons per year) have been in class III in 2012 and 2013 (with maintenance, hygiene and structural non-compliances) indicating the ineffectiveness of enforcement measures applied.

Inspection programmes are elaborated at national/regional/departmental level with the help of the SIGAL system. Implementation of inspection programme is regularly monitored at departmental and regional level via an official control monitoring system. The system allows monitoring of quantitative indicators and some qualitative indicators as well. The results of such monitoring for all of France were presented to the audit team. During annual management dialogues held at national/regional/departmental level, the inspection results achieved in the previous year are discussed and objectives of official services are set for the following year (including training needs). Through these dialogues, available resources are matched with demand.

However, in one department visited, the audit team noted that in 2011 and 2012 the planned inspection frequencies for poultry establishments had not been reached (e.g. out of 21 planned inspections of poultry cutting establishments only 13 had been carried out in 2011 and of 13 planned inspections of meat processing establishments only eight had been carried out in 2012).

A harmonised checklist ("inspection grid") and an inspection manual ("vade-mecum") are used during official controls.

In establishments visited, official control reports were available. When deficiencies had been found by the CA, the FBO provided corrective action plan with deadlines. In one slaughterhouse visited (class I), the audit team noted that after an annual inspection and some deficiencies (medium and minor) detected, the inspection report with accompanying letter was given to the FBO. However no action plan with deadlines was officially requested.

Although requested by the audit team, evidence of appropriate follow-up of corrective actions taken was not always available. In addition, the audit team noted that some identical non-compliances were reported in several consecutive reports in the same establishment, compromising the effectiveness of enforcement measures applied.

In addition to the above mentioned inspections the audit team noted that both official auxiliaries and the official veterinarian carry out other official controls, e.g. regarding pre-operational, operational and post-operational hygiene, checks on results of FBO own checks records, thematic inspections, certification for export of poultry meat/poultry meat products to third countries, and their findings are recorded in a logbook kept in the establishment.

However the audit team noted that only some of the deficiencies found in the establishments visited had been identified during official controls and had been recorded in inspection reports available.

General findings in establishments

In the establishments visited, the general hygiene conditions were overall adequate. However, the audit team identified some deficiencies.

For example (not all deficiencies were present in each establishment):

Regarding maintenance:

- Surfaces in some localised areas (especially floor-wall junctions) were not maintained in a sound condition and were not easy to clean and disinfect;
- Some paint peeling from ceiling surfaces;
- Some localised areas not protected against condensation and ice formation;
- Damaged floors in some areas.

Regarding hygiene practices:

- Storage of empty clean crates in close proximity to crates with live birds at reception area.
- Exposed fresh meat and cardboard boxes handled by the same operative during packing.
- Dusty fittings above exposed poultry meat.
- Presence of some fresh meat in cutting room with temperature of more than 9° C although no warming cutting carried out.
- Exposed meat stored in preformed crates placed directly on pallet.
- Insufficient cleaning of knives.
- Cleaning of dirty trays in close proximity to clean crates used for internal transport of fresh meat thus causing their contamination by splashing unclean water.

The official controls of the procedures based on HACCP principles are a part of sanitary control plan inspection. They are described in the service note (DGAL/SDSSA/N2012-8156).

Detailed guidance for inspection staff to carry out controls on HACCP based procedures are given in the DGAL's handbook.

All establishments visited by the audit team had a documented own-check system based on HACCP principles. Regular audits of the HACCP plans and Good Hygiene Practices are carried out by the CA. Uniform checklists are used during these audits.

The FBOs' procedures based on HACCP principles were in general well implemented.

Conclusions

There is a regular and documented system of official controls of poultry meat/poultry meat product establishments. In the establishments visited the general hygiene conditions were overall adequate; some deficiencies noted as regards maintenance and good hygiene practices had not been identified or recorded during official controls.

For the deficiencies identified by the CA during official controls the corrective actions to remedy the situation are not always adequately followed up and effectively enforced.

There were HACCP plans present in the establishments visited which were, in general, well implemented.

5.3.6 FBO compliance with microbiological criteria for foodstuffs and official sampling

Legal requirements

Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005, in particular Article 1.

Findings

FBO sampling activities

There was a comprehensive FBO sampling plan in the establishments visited. Microbiological analyses on products, water and surfaces are carried out in an FBO laboratory or in external laboratories.

The samples were taken according to the FBO sampling plan and laboratory results were available.

However some deficiencies were noted by the audit team such as:

- Insufficient number of sample units for meat preparations in one establishment visited (only one instead of the required five taken from the same batch);
- Except for one establishment visited, no audits of water as required under Council Directive 98/83/EC were carried out.

In most establishments visited the audit team noted that the analyses results for microbiology of water and products were compliant.

However in one establishment visited, where since April 2013 numerous results for process hygiene criterion (E. coli) in meat preparations were found non-compliant, no evidence that the FBO had performed proper follow-up investigations was available and no satisfactory corrective action had been implemented.

The audit team noted in each establishment visited that the CA regularly verifies FBO records of sampling programmes and their results with regard to compliance with microbiological criteria.

However, the above mentioned deficiencies had never been detected nor reported during the official controls.

In one slaughterhouse visited the audit team noted that since the beginning of 2012 results of neck skin samples were continuously non-compliant and *Salmonella* Indiana was recurrently detected. Despite its frequent presence in the establishment, the CA became aware of this problem only after the most recent CA inspection carried out in May of 2013.

Official sampling

Official sampling is carried out in the framework of official surveillance and monitoring plans. The national surveillance and monitoring plans are annually established.

The service order (DGAL/SDSSA/N2008-8009) gives details relating to implementation of microbiological analyses of foodstuffs and results processing.

Monitoring plan concerning poultry meat was carried out in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012:

In 2008

- *Salmonella* contamination of poultry and pork meat preparation and meat products at retail stage.
- Contamination in poultry and pig meat products at the distribution stage.

In 2009

- *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* contamination of fresh poultry meat at retail stage.
- Contamination in fresh chicken meat at the distribution stage.

In 2010

- *Salmonella* contamination of fresh poultry and pork meat at retail stage.
- Microbiological contamination of poultry and turkey carcasses in slaughterhouse.

In 2011

- *Salmonella* contamination of poultry and pork meat preparation at production stage.
- Chemicals control plan in poultry.

In 2012:

- Chemicals control plan in poultry.

The official sampling programme at establishment level includes residues (Directive 96/23/EC).

Results were available.

In two establishments visited the audit team noted that in 2012 two official samples were taken from fresh cuts and meat preparations for microbiological tests (*Salmonella* and *Salmonella* and *E. Coli* respectively) with compliant results.

Conclusions

FBO own-check sampling programmes on poultry meat and products derived therefrom are not implemented fully in compliance with Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 (i.e. in some instances inadequate number of sampling units were taken and actions foreseen in EU legislation in cases of non-compliant result for process hygiene criteria were ineffective) indicating the lack of effectiveness of the official controls on this issue. In addition audits of water are not carried out as required under Council Directive 98/83/EC.

Official sampling is centrally organised and the official samples have been taken according to this plan.

5.3.7 Traceability – Labelling – Identification marking

Legal requirements

Traceability: Article 4.6 of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.

Labelling: Chapter IV, Section V, Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

Identification marking: Article 4.6 of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 Section I, Annex II of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

Findings

Satisfactory traceability systems were in place in the establishments visited. Traceability checks are regularly performed by the CAs during official controls.

In two establishments visited the audit team noted the presence of some boxes of final products in dispatching area with labels and identification marks incorrectly applied - they were applied only on packaging material (not on wrappings) in such a way that they were not destroyed when the packaging was opened.

Conclusions

In establishments visited systems were in place to ensure full traceability.

5.4 RAPID ALERT SYSTEM FOR FOOD AND FEED (RASFF)

Legal requirements

Article 50 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002.

Regulation (EU) No 16/2011.

Findings

Since the beginning of 2011 there have been 21 Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notifications concerning poultry meat/poultry meat products originating in France.

In one case reviewed by the audit team, the operator and the CA carried out proper follow-up actions.

Conclusions

The CA takes appropriate action in response to RASFF notifications.

5.5 LABORATORIES

Legal requirements

Articles 11, 12 and 33 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

Findings

The list of food microbiology approved laboratories is published on the Ministry of Agriculture website, at this link: <http://agriculture.gouv.fr/laboratoires-agrees-methodes-officielles/alimentation>.

The audit team visited one accredited official laboratory. Accreditation had been granted by French Accreditation Body (COFRAC). The audit team noted that the methods used in the laboratory are

accredited. The laboratory is regularly audited by COFRAC to verify whether the conditions for accreditation are still met. The reports from these audits were available. The audit team noted that during the most recent audit no deficiencies had been detected in the food microbiology laboratory.

The official sampling and analysis methods used were either the reference methods as given in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 or alternative methods that had been validated according to the protocol of ISO 16140.

The methods are published on the following web page:

http://agriculture.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/Microbiologie_alimentaire_-_Liste_des_methodes_officielles_4_cle0ecde9.pdf

The audit team reviewed the documents relating to participation by the laboratory in proficiency tests for microbiological parameters (*Salmonella*, *Listeria*) and noted that the laboratory regularly participates in proficiency tests (with all methods accredited) organised by the national reference laboratory with satisfactory results.

Conclusions

The accredited laboratory visited has been designated to carry out analysis of samples taken during official controls in the poultry sector in accordance with Article 11 and 12 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 and it fulfils the requirements of EU legislation.

6 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

There is a system of official controls on poultry meat and products derived therefrom, which includes regular and risk based controls with documented procedures in place.

Although since the last poultry meat sector audit to France in 2008 some improvement was noted by the audit team, there are still serious deficiencies in ante and post-mortem inspection and national implementing rules differ significantly from current European Union legislation.

In addition effectiveness of the system of official controls is compromised by deficiencies detected by the audit team and not by the CA, in particular deficiencies regarding animal welfare conditions at the time of birds' slaughter.

For the deficiencies identified by the CA during official controls (e.g. in FBO own checks, animal welfare, regarding maintenance and hygienic practices in establishments) the corrective actions to remedy the situation are not always adequately followed up and effectively enforced.

7 CLOSING MEETING

During the closing meeting held in Paris on 20/06/2013, the audit team presented the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the audit to the CAs.

During this meeting, the CCA acknowledged the findings and preliminary conclusions presented by the audit team.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The CCA should provide Commission services with guarantees and an action plan, including a timetable for its completion, within twenty five working days of receipt of the report, in order to address all of the deficiencies identified and in particular the following recommendations:

Nº.	Recommendation
1.	The CA should ensure that there is sufficient official supervision to carry out the official controls required under Annex I with the frequency specified in Section III, Chapter II of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, in particular ante and post-mortem inspections.
2.	The CCA should ensure that official instructions related to ante and post-mortem inspection in poultry slaughterhouses are in line with EU requirements, in particular with Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.
3.	The CCA should keep establishments' approval under review when carrying-out official controls as required by Article 31(2) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 and therefore ensuring that deficiencies found by the audit team are corrected in the establishments visited and are not present in the other ones, in particular deficiencies regarding maintenance and hygienic practices.
4.	The CCA should ensure that official controls are carried out regularly, on risk basis and appropriate frequency, at any of the stage of production, processing and distribution of food and of animals and animal products, including controls on FBO compliance with provisions in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on poultry farms as required under Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.
5.	The CCA should ensure that ante-mortem inspections are carried out as required by Annex I, Section I, Chapter II of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.
6.	The CCA should ensure that requirements of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 on post-mortem inspection are respected, in particular: Those concerning supervision of inspection, designation and equipment of post-mortem inspection points, the speed of slaughter line which shall allow a proper inspection, and requirements that birds' cavities and accompanying offal are subjected to post-mortem inspection (Part D, Chapter II, Section I, Annex I). The official veterinarian must personally carry out official checks required under point 1 Part B Chapter V Section IV Annex I.
7.	In order to comply with animal welfare requirements, CAs should ensure that the deficiencies in relation to animal welfare identified by the audit team in slaughterhouses are corrected and are not present in other approved establishments. In particular, stunning of birds shall be carried out in line with Article 4 and checks on

N°.	Recommendation
	stunning are to be carried out in line with Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009.
8.	The CAs should ensure that, when non-compliances are identified during official controls, these are followed up and that effective enforcement actions are taken. (Article 54 and 55 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004).
9.	The CCA should ensure that when FBO own-check sampling programmes are implemented, the sampling plans and measures taken in response to unsatisfactory results are in compliance with EU requirements (Annex I Chapter 1 and 2, and Article 7 of Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005).
10.	The CA should ensure that potable water used in poultry meat and meat products establishments is tested for all parameters (audit of water) in compliance with Council Directive 98/83/EC.

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

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/rep_details_en.cfm?rep_inspection_ref=2013-6688

ANNEX 1 - LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Dir. 96/23/EC	OJ L 125, 23.5.1996, p. 10-32	Council Directive 96/23/EC of 29 April 1996 on measures to monitor certain substances and residues thereof in live animals and animal products and repealing Directives 85/358/EEC and 86/469/EEC and Decisions 89/187/EEC and 91/664/EEC
Dir. 98/83/EC	OJ L 330, 5.12.1998, p. 32-54	Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption
Reg. 178/2002	OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1-24	Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety
Reg. 852/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 3	Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs
Reg. 853/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 55, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 22	Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin
Reg. 854/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 206, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 83	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
Reg. 882/2004	OJ L 165, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 191, 28.5.2004, p. 1	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

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Reg. 2073/2005	OJ L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 1-26	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs
Reg. 1333/2008	OJ L 354, 31.12.2008, p. 16-33	Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on food additives
Reg. 1099/2009	OJ L 303, 18.11.2009, p. 1-30	Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing
Reg. 16/2011	OJ L 6, 11.1.2011, p. 7-10	Commission Regulation (EU) No 16/2011 of 10 January 2011 laying down implementing measures for the Rapid alert system for food and feed