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FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT

CARRIED OUT IN

CYPRUS

FROM 21 TO 29 JANUARY 2014

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE THE SALMONELLA NATIONAL CONTROL PROGRAMMES
FOR PARTICULAR POULTRY POPULATIONS (BREEDERS, LAYING HENS, BROILERS
AND TURKEYS)

In response to information provided by the Competent Authority, any factual error noted in the draft report has been corrected; any clarification appears in the form of a footnote.

Executive Summary

This report describes the outcome of an audit carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office in Cyprus, from 21 to 29 January 2014.

The objective of the current audit was to evaluate the actions taken by the Cypriot competent authorities in order to control Salmonella, in particular concerning the implementation of the Salmonella National Control Programmes.

The competent authority has made a considerable effort in order to address the recommendations from the previous Food and Veterinary Office audit in 2011. The audit team noted a significant improvement in the implementation of Salmonella control programmes.

The Salmonella National Controls Plans are implemented in a harmonised way in the whole country and in all poultry populations.

The competent authority at central level is in the position to review and monitor adequately the implementation and the progress of the programmes.

However some weaknesses have been found in relation to biosecurity measures, routine official confirmatory sampling is carried out in all cases of positive own-checks in breeders and laying hens, restrictive measures on table eggs are imposed only once the serotyping is available. The audit team also noted that although a central database exists, there is neither legal obligation nor procedures to register, therein, broiler holdings.

The report addresses to the Cypriot competent authorities a number of recommendations aimed at rectifying identified shortcomings and enhancing the control system in place.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
AHWD	Animal Health and Welfare Division
CA	Competent Authority
DVO	District Veterinary Office
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EU	European Union
EURL	European Union Reference Laboratory
FBO	Food Business Operator
FCI	Food Chain Information
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
IAS	Internal Audit Service
MANRE	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
S/E	<i>Salmonella</i> Enteritidis
SNCP	<i>Salmonella</i> National Control Programme
S/T	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium
VS	Veterinary Services

1 INTRODUCTION

The audit took place in Cyprus from 21 to 29 January 2014 and was undertaken as part of the Food and Veterinary Office's (FVO) planned audit programme.

The audit team comprised two inspectors from the FVO and one national expert. Representatives from the Competent Authority (CA) accompanied the audit team during the whole audit.

An opening meeting was held on 21 January 2014 with the CA in Nicosia. 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 the audit was to evaluate the actions taken by the Cypriot CA in order to control *Salmonella*, in particular the implementation of the *Salmonella* National Control Programmes (SNCPs) for breeding flocks and laying hens of *Gallus gallus*, broilers flocks and turkeys.

In order to achieve these objectives the audit team evaluated the organisation of the CA and its capacity for implementing the relevant European Union (EU) requirements.

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

COMPETENT AUTHORITY		
CA central office	1	Opening and closing meeting
CA Regional offices	2	One District Veterinary Office (DVO) and one DVO CA met during on-the-spot visit
LABORATORIES		
National Reference Laboratory (NRL)	1	NRL for <i>Salmonella</i>
Official laboratory	1	
Private laboratory	1	
PRIMARY PRODUCTION		
Breeding farms	1	
Laying hen farms	2	One pullet rearing farm
Broiler farms	1	
Slaughterhouse processing turkeys	1	Offices (checks on <i>Salmonella</i> analysis reports, Food Chain Information (FCI) and health certificates)

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;
- Article 17 of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the control of Salmonella and other specified food-borne zoonotic agents.

Full references to EU legal instruments quoted in this report are provided in Annex 1 and refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

4 BACKGROUND

The last audit in Cyprus concerning the SNCPs for the poultry populations described in the objectives took place in 2011 (ref. DG (SANCO)/2011-8841). The final report of that audit concluded that there were problems on the verification and supervision of the programmes implementation and lack of official controls on laboratories involved in the SNCPs.

More information on that audit can be found on the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/rep_details_en.cfm?rep_id=2789

In Cyprus, according to the CA, there are currently 8 breeding holdings, 36 holdings of laying hens and 96 broiler holdings subject to SNCPs. The audit team was informed by the CA that each year approximately 8 flocks of fattening turkeys are reared on a seasonal basis in broiler holdings (for more details see chapter 5.7.)

There have been no Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notifications linked to table eggs or poultry meat from Cyprus between 2011 and the date of this audit.

According to the CA, the last known infection prevalences (2013) in Cyprus¹ were as follows:-

- Breeding hens: 0 % (EU average is 0.6%)
- Laying hens: 3 % (the reduction target in Cyprus was 11.2 %) (EU average is 1.5%)
- Broilers: 0 % (EU average is 0.3%)
- Turkeys: 0 % (EU average is 0.5%)

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 COMPETENT AUTHORITY

Legal requirements

Article 3(1) of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council requires Member States to designate a competent authority or competent authorities for the purpose of this Regulation and notify the Commission thereof.

Article 4(6) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires the CA to carry out internal audits or may have external audits carried out.

Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires the CA to ensure that staff performing official

¹ As per comment provided by the CA, the prevalences are calculated on the basis of the results of the official controls and if they were calculated on the basis of the total of official and own checks, the prevalences would be lower.

controls receive, for their area of competence, appropriate training.

Audit findings

A detailed description of the CA can be found in the country profile for Cyprus on the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/controlsystems_en.cfm?co_id=CY

In Cyprus, the Veterinary Services (VS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment (MANRE), through the Animal Health and Welfare Division (AHWD), is the CA responsible for the drafting, coordination and supervision of the *Salmonella* control programmes. The programmes are implemented at regional level by the five DVOs.

The DVOs and their subordinated Rural Veterinary Stations are responsible for the collection of official samples and their transport to the official laboratory involved in the programmes. Own-check samples are collected by approved samplers and analysed in approved private laboratories. List of approved laboratories is available to relevant parties on the VS website.

Every year DVOs plan the official sampling including approximate dates of sampling and forward the programme to AHWD. Planning of own-check sampling is carried out by the approved private laboratories.

SNCP manuals covering the various poultry populations have been prepared and adopted by the AHWD. These manuals set out, in particular, sampling frequencies and sampling protocols for official and own-check samples, preparation of samples and action to be taken depending on analyses results. SNCP manuals, related amendments, relevant legislation and standardised forms are contained in a single folder on the website of VS which has restricted access. These documents are available to officials and food business operators (FBOs), private veterinarians and staff of private laboratories who are involved in the implementation of the SNCPs.

The Animal Health Law of 2001-2012 provides compensation in case of animals culled.

In case of legal infringements related to SNCPs the case is brought to court. An amendment to the national Animal Health Law of 2001-2012 in order to set administrative fines for the SNCPs is undergoing legal review.

Training

In 2012 the VS organised two specific training seminars for officials in relation to SNCPs. Relevant training material is available on the VS website. Topics covered included the presentation of the manuals for the SNCPs, sampling protocols and technical specifications for the collection of own-check samples in laying hens and broilers. Evidence of attendance at these training sessions was available to the audit team. Documented evidence was also provided by AHWD that FBOs, private veterinarians and private laboratories' staff who also attended these seminars undertook an exam in order to be approved as samplers.

The audit team was informed that some officials participated in training courses on SNCPs under the European Commission's Better Training for Safer Food programme.

A leaflet issued by the AHWD has been distributed to FBOs in relation to measures to prevent incoming *Salmonella* infections carried by animals, feed, drinking water, vehicles, workers, hygiene management at farms and hygiene in transporting animals and eggs. This leaflet and the European poultry meat industry guide on good hygiene practice in flocks of broilers are available on the VS website.

The audit team noted that in general officials, laboratory staff and FBOs interviewed during the audit were familiar with relevant EU legislative requirements and had adequate knowledge of the implementation of SNCPs, in particular sampling frequency and sampling protocols to be applied.

However, despite the fact that biosecurity was one of the topics of a training organised by VS in 2012 for officials and poultry farmers and information on this subject is available on the VS website, some deficiencies in biosecurity were consistently detected by the audit team in most holdings visited which had not been identified during official controls (see more in Chapter 5.2.).

Audit

Internal audit was performed by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) of the Veterinary Services in July 2013 in order to evaluate the implementation of the *Salmonella* control programmes. The report of this audit and the action plan were available to the audit team. The audit team was informed by AHWD that a follow-up audit is scheduled to take place in July 2014. The audit team noted that some recommendations of the resulting internal audit report have already been implemented.

Conclusions

The CA responsible for official controls within the scope of this audit is clearly designated in compliance with EU requirements.

In general staff involved in official controls of SNCPs received relevant training. However some weaknesses exist regarding the knowledge among CA staff in relation to biosecurity measures to be applied at farm level by the FBO.

An internal audit in line with point 6, Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 has been carried out.

5.2 CONTROLS AT FARM LEVEL

Legal requirements

Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires Member States to carry out regularly, on a risk basis and with appropriate frequency controls on feed or food businesses.

Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 sets out the general hygiene provisions for FBOs involved in primary production.

Chapter I of Annex II to Council Directive 2009/158/EC requires at least one inspection per year per holding by an official veterinarian in order to be approved by the CA for the purposes of intra-EU trade in poultry or hatching eggs.

Audit findings

Under Cypriot national law it is mandatory for holdings with breeding flocks and for laying hen holdings to be registered. A registration number is allocated to breeding farms by the VS, while in the case of laying hens farms, the number is allocated by the Department of Agriculture. The audit team was informed and saw evidence that broiler holdings are registered centrally, however there is neither a legal obligation nor formalised procedures in place to register such holdings. The CA explained that identification and registration of holdings occur because FBOs and holdings are well known to them due to the small size of the country. Turkeys are reared in broiler farms (see more in Chapter 5.7.).

All farms visited by the audit team were registered with a unique holding number in a database maintained at central level. Poultry houses were also registered.

The audit team noted that all the farms visited were subject to a regular official supervision by the DVOs.

Compliance with biosecurity conditions is checked by DVOs during annual inspection visits. A uniform checklist, which requires also verification of SNCP implementation in the farm, is used

during these controls and also for the investigation in case of suspicion of *Salmonella* or *Salmonella* infection. In addition, the audit team was informed by AHWD that an annual inspection in breeding farms, hatcheries and in laying hen holdings is necessary to renew a licence required under national law. Specific checklists for this purpose, which include also verification of biosecurity measures applied in the farm, are used by DVO officials.

In three out of four farms visited problems concerning biosecurity conditions were detected by the audit team. i.e. inadequate personal biosecurity measures for workers and visitors when entering the poultry houses (clothes of workers not changed, changing of boots/shoes or protective clothing done in incorrect place), no pest-proof doors and holes in the walls of the poultry houses, vegetation such as trees in close proximity to the poultry house. In particular the audit team found that:-

- In one farm visited the DVO official had not recorded the deficiencies observed by the audit team neither in the checklist used during the annual inspection visit nor in the checklist used to renew the annual licence. The DVO official did not consider the shortcomings as significant.
- In one farm visited with *Salmonella* history the DVO official did not record the deficiencies observed by the audit team neither in the checklist used during the annual inspection visit nor in the form used during the epidemiological survey.
- In the broiler farm visited a deficiency which was noted by the audit team was not considered as significant by the DVO official. Moreover, the audit team was informed by the DVO that it is not always possible to carry out annual inspection visits in broiler holdings due to understaffing.

The above mentioned findings are not in compliance with Points 4 (f) and 4 (h), Part A (II), Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

FBOs' farm records were well kept and included, amongst others, information on number of birds per house, mortality, vaccination, veterinary treatments (veterinary medicinal products used, date of administration and withdrawal period).

Feed control

The Department of Agriculture within MANRE is responsible for feed and feed mill official controls. The AHWD informed the audit team that the Department of Agriculture is responsible for the controls on *Salmonella* in high risk feed material such as fish meal, fish feed, soya feed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 and the National Laws 1993-2007 for feed. Samples of imported raw material considered as high risk are collected at the points of entry and tested for *Salmonella*.

Every feed mill is obliged to have an own-check sampling programme based on Hazard Analyses and Critical Control Points principles. The audit team was informed that from 2014 both official and own-check sampling should include tests for *Salmonella*. Every feed mill has its own procedures regarding sampling protocol e.g. in one farm with a feed mill attached visited a sample of 2 kilos from 1 batch of two tons was taken. In two farms visited by the audit team own-check feed samples were already taken and analyses reports were available with negative *Salmonella* test result.

Department of Agriculture and VS are cooperating in the preparation of written procedures on control of feedstuffs which will be included in the SNCP manuals at the end of 2014.

Water

In the farms visited water samples were taken at least annually by the FBO and in all cases water was analysed for microbiological parameters. The analyses results were available to the audit team.

In the breeding hen farm visited the water was also tested for *Salmonella* with negative results. In the broiler farm visited the water analysis report indicated microbiological results deemed unsatisfactory by the FBO, sanitation of water pipes was carried out and water resampled. Test results for these new samples were not available yet.

Cleaning and disinfection

Detailed guidelines concerning routine cleaning and disinfection of the poultry houses after depopulation and before restocking are available to the FBOs in the SNCP manuals. In the farms visited this cleaning and disinfection was routinely carried out and verification of its effectiveness by taking environmental samples is optional for the FBOs.

Comprehensive instructions concerning cleaning and disinfection after depopulation of a positive flock for *Salmonella* targeted serotypes are included in the SNCP manuals. The audit team was informed that in this case an effective cleaning and disinfection is carried out by the FBO and the poultry house cannot be repopulated unless the effectiveness of the cleaning and disinfection has been confirmed by *Salmonella* negative official environmental sample results. Documented evidence of this sampling was provided to the audit team.

Epidemiological surveys in the framework of the SNCPs

The SNCP manuals require the DVOs to carry out an epidemiological investigation in case of positive test results for the relevant *Salmonella* serotypes.

In all the cases reviewed by the audit team a standard form which includes assessment of biosecurity conditions, indication of the possible source of contamination and recommendations specifically targeted at the situation on the farm, was used. The audit team was informed by DVO officials that a copy of this document is sent to the AHWD and to the owner of the holding. The audit team saw documented evidence of such survey in the cases reviewed related to farms with a *Salmonella* history. The audit team noted that in one farm visited where *Salmonella* Typhimurium (S/T) was found the deficiencies in biosecurity observed by the audit team had not been recorded in the epidemiological investigation form (for more details see Chapter 5.5.).

The audit team was informed that under the SNCPs, even in cases of *Salmonella* Hadar, *Salmonella* Infantis and *Salmonella* Virchow being found in poultry populations where these serotypes are non-relevant, an epidemiological investigation should be carried out by the district level. However, according to the CA, this is not always possible due to understaffing.

Conclusions

Breeding and layer hens farms are appropriately registered. Concerning broiler holdings, although a central database exists, the CA is not in the position to ensure that all broiler holdings are registered as it is not mandatory for the FBO to register its establishment.

Adequate tools to prevent *Salmonella* contamination are in place, such as effective cleaning and disinfection, water quality control and checks on feeding stuffs.

Concerning biosecurity measures, the official controls in place do not guarantee that FBOs comply with general hygiene provisions laid down in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

5.3 GENERAL ISSUES ON SNCPs

The audit team noted that, in line with the SNCPs, official samples are taken by DVO officials while own-check samples are taken by approved samplers trained by AHWD. In the majority of cases it is laboratory staff who performs own-check sampling. The audit team was informed by the AHWD and saw evidence that the approved samplers are registered in an up-to-date list maintained

at central level. This list is available, on the VS website, to the relevant parties involved in the SNCPS.

A single form which contains two different sections (sampling and laboratory report sections) is used to accompany official and own-check samples to the relevant laboratory and to record the results of *Salmonella* analysis by laboratory staff. Details such as date of sampling, flock identification, type of sample, number of sample units, age of the flock, vaccination, antibiotic treatment including date of administration and withdrawal period are entered in the sampling section of the form by the sampler. The laboratory performing the analysis enters the results of the analysis and other information (i.e. sample identification, date of receipt of the sample, acceptance or rejection of the sample, date of beginning and date of completion of the analysis, number of sub-samples tested, method used) in the laboratory report section of the same form. The audit team noted that in all cases reviewed these forms were duly completed.

Once official samples are received by the official laboratory, a copy of the accompanying form is forwarded to AHWD for evaluation of the data entered by the sampler. The laboratory staff evaluates the suitability of samples and any information relevant for the laboratory recorded by the sampler in the accompanying form. A checklist is used by the official laboratory for this purpose. If after evaluation both parties are satisfied, the laboratory proceeds with testing and the *Salmonella* analysis result is registered in the relevant part of the form which is forwarded to the AHWD for a final evaluation and registration in a central database. In case a deficiency is detected by one or both parties, the DVO is requested to repeat the sampling and AHWD follows up the performance of the DVO failing to comply with the *Salmonella* control programme. If repeated mistakes are made the hierarchy will be informed in order to initiate corrective actions and if the DVO continues to be non-compliant the head of VS is notified for further actions.

The audit team was informed that five targeted visits in the DVOs were carried out by the AHWD in 2012 and in 2013 to check the implementation of the programmes when at central level errors had been detected.

Regarding own-check sampling, once the private laboratory has performed *Salmonella* testing, laboratory staff records the result and other relevant information in the laboratory report section of the accompanying form and forwards this form to the relevant DVO. The audit team noted that, once the DVO has received the form, a checklist is used by DVO officials to evaluate all the details contained. If the DVO is satisfied this form is forwarded to the AHWD for registration in a central database. In case a deficiency is detected during evaluation, FBO is informed by DVO and the form and the checklist including the reason of non-validity of sampling are notified by DVO to AHWD and the private laboratory. The private laboratory is required to repeat the test and AHWD follows up the private laboratory's performance. The audit team was informed by the CA that one of the more frequent reasons of non-validity of sampling was the sample being taken by an unapproved sampler.

The audit team saw evidence of correspondence between AHWD and a private laboratory repeatedly failing to perform correctly sampling and testing. The AHWD informed the audit team that if repeated errors are made by a private laboratory in relation to sampling and/or testing, the NRL, which supervises the private laboratories on behalf of AHWD, will be informed in order to initiate corrective actions in the laboratory concerned. The private laboratory can be deleted from the list of approved laboratories by the AHWD if during the audit carried out by the NRL the laboratory continues to be non-compliant with the requirements of the *Salmonella* control programmes.

All sampling results (both official and own-check) are recorded by the AHWD in a central database. The database is in operation since 2012 and is updated in real time. Other information is also recorded in this database i.e. holding registration number, poultry population, date of sampling,

poultry house number, type of samples (i.e. boot swabs), number of sample units, age of birds, date of depopulation, if sample was rejected and record of letters issued to the FBO. The audit team was informed by AHWD that FBOs notifies any change to AHWD.

The audit team was informed by AHWD that at least once per year the AHWD performs a follow-up of the implementation of official and own-check controls. The audit team saw evidence that where deficiencies were detected letters with recommendations were sent by AHWD to DVOs. At local level, verification of own-check sampling is also carried out by the DVO officials during the annual inspection visit to farms.

Conclusions

The database and reporting system in place enables the CA to monitor continuously the implementation of official and own-check sampling and to review and evaluate the progress of the SNCPs.

5.4 SNCP FOR BREEDING HENS

Legal requirements

Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 outlines how targets shall be established for the reduction of the prevalence of zoonoses, including *Salmonella*. The target for breeding hens has been fixed by Commission Regulation (EU) No 200/2010. To achieve the targets, Member States have to implement a SNCP in breeding hens, including detailed sampling rules both for FBOs and for the official services. The requirements applicable until March 2010 were outlined in Regulation (EC) No 1003/2005.

Audit findings

The SNCP for breeding flocks was implemented in the region visited and is based on sampling at the holding.

According to the data provided by the CA related to 2013, the EU target was achieved.

Vaccination for *Salmonella* in breeding flocks is not mandatory either under SNCP or under EU legislation, however it is recommended by the CA. The audit team noted that in the farm visited flocks had been vaccinated against *Salmonella* Enteritidis (S/E) and S/T.

The audit team noted that official and own-check sampling were in general carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding sampling frequency and protocol applied. The audit team saw documentary evidence in the farm that when the FBO did not perform own-check sampling at the required frequency, the deficiency was identified by the DVO official.

The audit team reviewed documentation of a positive case in 2012 when S/E was detected in a flock during official sampling. Once S/E was identified, a letter was sent by DVO to the FBO imposing restrictive measures such as ban of movement of birds and eggs from or to the holding, destruction of birds and eggs, cleaning and disinfection of the poultry house and hatchery affected, restocking after hygiene gap of 21 days from the date the official samples tested negative for *Salmonella* targeted serotypes.

Official samples were taken in all flocks of this holding. This goes beyond EU legislative requirements.

In addition, an epidemiological investigation was carried out in the farm in order to identify the possible source of the S/E contamination. Deficiencies were detected such as garbage close to the poultry house, abundant vegetation, no replacement of bait boxes and mice found in litter. The audit team was informed by the DVO that corrective actions were taken by the FBO.

The audit team was informed by AHWD that in case of detection of *Salmonella* Virchow, Infantis and Hadar, positive flocks are placed under official supervision. Biosecurity measures are reviewed, measures taken by the FBO to reduce or eliminate the infection are followed up and an epidemiological survey is carried out. The audit team saw documented evidence that this procedure had been respected.

The audit team also noted that in case of detection of other non-relevant *Salmonella* serotypes, an FBO is informed by letter by the DVO to reinforce biosecurity measures.

The audit team was informed by AHWD and it is also stated in the SNCP manual for breeders that in case of detection of S/E and S/T in own-check samples, restrictive measures are imposed and official confirmatory sampling is carried out in all cases, however using a more sensitive sampling protocol (consisting of five pairs of boot swabs and one dust sample). The audit team was informed by AHWD that the reason for this is for the FBO to obtain compensation. This is not in compliance with EU legislation which permits to repeat the testing only in exceptional cases when the CA has reason to question the results of the original test such as false positive or false negative results.

Conclusions

The implementation of the SNCP for the breeding hen population is satisfactory regarding official and own-check sampling frequency and sampling protocol used, measures taken for positive flocks, control measures when infection is found, and in line with EU legal requirements applicable to this poultry population.

The practice to perform routinely confirmatory sampling is not in compliance with point 2.2.2.2 (c) of Annex to Regulation (EU) No 200/2010.

5.5 SNCP FOR LAYING HENS

Legal requirements

Both Regulations (EC) No 2160/2003 and (EU) No 517/2011 lay down rules for SNCPs for laying hen populations of Member States. The requirements applicable until May 2011 were outlined in Regulation (EC) No 1168/2006.

Audit findings

The audit team noted that the SNCP for laying flocks is implemented in the region visited.

According to the data provided by the CA related to 2013, the EU target for reduction of prevalence was achieved.

The audit team was informed by AHWD that under Cypriot legislation, registration is required for holdings with poultry flocks of more than 350 birds. It is a national obligation that laying hen holdings placing table eggs on the market to take part in the SNCP.

Although it is not mandatory either under the SNCP or under EU legislation, the farm visited applied vaccination against S/E and S/T.

The audit team noted that official and own-check sampling were in general carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding sampling frequency and protocol applied. The audit team saw evidence in the farm that the DVO regularly monitors the frequency of own-check sampling. When the FBO did not take one own-check sample at the correct frequency the, DVO detected the deficiency and sent a letter to the farmer requesting the correct implementation of the programme.

The laying hen farm visited was *Salmonella* positive in 2012 when S/T was detected during official sampling. After receiving positive serotyping results and the confirmation that it was non-vaccine strain of S/T, the flock was culled using CO₂. The audit team noted that AHWD did not impose

restrictive measures on eggs until the positive serotyping result was available to them. This is not in line with Part D (2), Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003.

The audit team noted that on the same day official samples were taken in the other poultry houses (three faecal samples) and in addition five birds per house were taken by the DVO to check for the presence of antimicrobial substances.

The audit team noted that cleaning and disinfection was carried by the FBO in the house affected and its effectiveness was verified by the DVO by taking environmental samples. Cleaning and disinfection and official sampling were repeated because the official samples turned out to be positive for *Salmonella* Virchow. Restocking took place after more than 21 days from the official confirmation of the absence of *Salmonella*. Sampling of the infected house after restocking when birds came to the age of 24 +/-two weeks was performed.

The DVO carried out an epidemiological investigation in the farm on the same day of receipt of the positive serotyping result and the deficiency identified was the incorrect implementation of the own-check programme prior to 2012. However the audit team noted that some deficiencies related to biosecurity conditions i.e. no pest-proof door and holes in the walls of a poultry house had not been recorded by the DVO official.

The audit team was informed that in case of detection of other non-relevant *Salmonella* serotypes, the FBO is requested by letter from the DVO to reinforce biosecurity measures.

It is stated in the SNCP manual for laying hens that in case of detection of S/E or S/T in own-check samples, restrictive measures are imposed and official confirmatory sampling is carried out in all cases using a sampling protocol laid down in point 4(b) of Part D, Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003. The audit team was informed by AHWD that the reason for performing confirmatory sampling is for the FBO to obtain compensation. This is not in line with Point 4, Annex II, Part D of Regulation No 2160/2003 which excludes routine resampling. The audit team noted that restrictive measures on eggs are imposed only after the serotyping of the initial *Salmonella* spp. isolates test positive. This is not in line with Part D (2), Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003.

In the pullet rearing farm visited the frequency of own-check sampling was respected and the sampling protocol applied was the same as for adult flocks.

Conclusions

The implementation of the SNCP for the laying hen population is in general in compliance with the EU legal requirements as regards sampling frequency and sampling protocol applied.

The policy of routine confirmatory sampling is not in compliance with Point 4, Annex II, Part D of Regulation No 2160/2003.

Measures taken after positive results are adopted with unnecessary delay (at serotyping stage).

5.6 SNCP FOR BROILERS

Legal requirements

Both Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 and Regulation (EU) No 200/2012 set rules for SNCPS in the broiler population of the Member States.

Audit findings

The SNCP for broiler flocks is implemented in the region visited.

According to the data provided by the CA related to 2013, the EU prevalence target was achieved.

Official sampling is carried out by DVOs each year as prescribed under EU legislation. No

guidelines have been adopted on how to select 10% of holdings to be subject to official sampling. However the audit team was informed that at the start of each calendar year each DVO selects 10% of holdings on the basis of a risk analysis taking into account i.e. holdings with *Salmonella* positive history and size of the holding. The audit team was informed that the derogation laid down in point 2.1 (a) of Annex of Regulation (EU) No 200/2012 will be applied in 2014 and will be one of the criteria considered for the selection of holdings for official sampling.

The audit team noted that in the broiler holding visited own-check sampling was carried out in compliance with EU legislation regarding frequency and protocol used. In the cases reviewed by the audit team, related to this farm and other broiler holdings, *Salmonella* samples (two pair of boot-swabs) were taken within three weeks before slaughter. The audit team was informed that the farm visited had not been selected for official sampling.

In Cyprus, ante-mortem inspection is carried out at the holding of provenance and the health certificate is issued by official or private contracted veterinarians. The FCI is issued once for the whole flock while the health certificate is issued for every batch of birds moving to the slaughterhouse.

FCI and health certificate include information on *Salmonella* test result. Both these documents and *Salmonella* analyses report indicates until when the result is valid.

In the cases reviewed by the audit team *Salmonella* test results were included in FCI and health certificate. The audit team saw evidence that the results were always available before the birds had been slaughtered.

Conclusions

The implementation of the SNCP for broilers is overall in compliance with EU legal requirements applicable to this poultry population.

5.7 SNCP FOR TURKEYS

Legal requirements

Regulations (EC) No 2160/2003 and (EU) No 1190/2012 set rules for the SNCP in the turkey population. The requirements applicable until December 2012 were outlined in Regulation (EC) No 584/2008

Audit findings

According to the data provided by the CA related to 2013, the EU target was achieved.

There are no turkey breeding holdings in Cyprus.

Concerning the production of fattening turkeys the CA explained that this is seasonal (i.e. day old chicks are supplied by the EU market, usually in September and October, for fattening and being slaughtered during the Christmas period) and therefore fattening turkey holdings, as such, do not exist in Cyprus. Turkeys are reared in broiler holdings and such holdings and turkey houses are identified by the CA in a separate list. In 2013 there were 6 such holdings with 8 flocks.

The audit team was informed by AHWD that no guidelines have been adopted on how to select the 10 % holdings to be subject to official sampling, however every year 10% of the holdings are selected on the basis of a risk analysis to be subject to official sampling. In 2013 4 flocks were officially tested.

The audit team did not visit any broiler holding where turkeys were reared but carried out documentary checks in a slaughterhouse where turkeys had been processed and where *Salmonella*

analysis reports, FCI, and health certificates are kept.

The audit team noted that in the cases reviewed, *Salmonella* samples were taken within three weeks before slaughter in compliance with EU legislation.

FCI and health certificate are issued following the same procedure as described in case of broilers. In the cases studied by the audit team FCI and health certificate included *Salmonella* test results and validity of this test was indicated in both documents and in the *Salmonella* analyses report. The audit team saw evidence that the results were always available before the birds had been slaughtered.

Conclusions

The implementation of the SNCP for turkeys is in general in compliance with EU legal requirements applicable to this poultry population.

5.8 LABORATORIES

Legal requirements

Article 33 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 lays down the responsibilities and tasks of the NRLs designated by the Member States.

Article 12 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires CAs to only designate official laboratories that fulfil certain quality standards.

Additionally, Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 lays down requirements for laboratories participating in SNCPs, including the need to apply quality assurance systems and to participate in collaborative testing.

The relevant regulations for the different poultry populations lay down rules for the detection method (ISO 6579 Annex D) and serotyping method (Kaufmann-White scheme) to be used in the context of SNCPs.

Audit findings

The NRL for *Salmonella* is the Laboratory for the Control of Foods of Animal Origin.

The AHWD informed the audit team that laboratories involved in the SNCPs have to be approved.

The official and private laboratories approved for the SNCPs are under the supervision of the NRL which performs audits with a frequency of one per year. All private laboratories have been audited in 2012 and 2013. Checklists used for this purpose were provided to the audit team. The results of these controls are sent to AHWD who decides if the laboratory should be maintained on the list.

All laboratories (official and private) are accredited to ISO 17025 and implement a protocol for acceptance/rejection of samples.

SNCP manuals include a specific detailed procedure for sample delivery and rejection of official samples. In all cases reviewed by the audit team, samples for *Salmonella* analyses were submitted to the laboratory within the legislative time-frame. The audit team was informed and saw evidence that both official and own-check samples were transported to the laboratory within 24 hours of sampling.

The NRL for *Salmonella* in Cyprus is accredited to ISO 17025 by the Hellenic Accreditation System. The current accreditation is valid until 02.03.2016.

This laboratory carries out *Salmonella* serotyping for isolates from official and private laboratories and reports the result of serotyping to AHWD, the relevant DVO and the laboratory concerned. The

audit team saw evidence that the serotyping results are sent to the relevant parties on the same day the analyses is completed. All methods are in the scope of accreditation.

The NRL participates once per year in collaborative tests organised by the European Union Reference Laboratory (EURL) for *Salmonella* serotyping with positive results. The NRL staff participates in annual EURL workshops.

The NRL passes on to all laboratories involved in SNCPs information received from the EURL. The audit team was informed that it would be possible to train laboratory staff in SNCP related topics on demand however such training had not been performed yet.

The Pathology, Bacteriology and Parasitology Laboratory is the official laboratory designated by AHWD to carry out analyses of official *Salmonella* samples and is accredited to ISO 17025. This laboratory applies the correct method of analysis however this method is not within the scope of its accreditation. Collaborative tests for *Salmonella* isolation were carried out in 2012 and 2013 with satisfactory results. The tests were organised by the EURL using the faecal matrix.

There are procedures in place for samples rejection. The audit team saw evidence that a checklist to accept or reject samples is used by the official laboratory where i.e. number, type, temperature and weight of samples are taken into account. The audit team was informed by AHWD that if an official sample is taken during antibiotic treatment or the withdrawal period is not taken into consideration by the sampler, the laboratory reject it. The audit team was informed that one official sample was rejected for this reason in 2013. All rejected samples are registered.

The audit team was informed that pooling of samples is carried out in the laboratory. The notification of positive results was timely in all the cases reviewed by the audit team.

There are eight private laboratories designated by AHWD for testing of *Salmonella* own-check samples and registered in a list available to relevant parties. All of them are accredited to ISO 17025 and are using the correct method for *Salmonella* isolation.

Seven out of eight laboratories involved in SNCPs participated in the collaborative tests for *Salmonella* isolation organised by the official laboratory of another EU member state.

If the results of the annual controls are not satisfactory AHWD has the power to remove a laboratory concerned from the list.

The audit team visited one private laboratory. The method used was in the scope of accreditation. The audit team noted that the laboratory had not participated in collaborative tests for *Salmonella* isolation. According to the NRL reliability of tests is demonstrated by the fact that this laboratory reports a high number of isolates confirmed by serotyping as positive. However the audit team was informed by the NRL that this laboratory has signed an agreement to participate in collaborative tests from February 2014. This test will be repeated once per year.

Both official and private laboratories use the harmonised sampling protocol where all necessary information is included.

Conclusions

Laboratories involved in the SNCPs are in compliance with the requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003.

6 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The competent authority has made a considerable effort in order to address the recommendations from the previous Food and Veterinary Office audit in 2011. The audit team noted a significant

improvement in the implementation of *Salmonella* control programmes.

The *Salmonella* National Controls Plans are implemented in a harmonised way in the whole country and in all poultry populations.

The competent authority at central level is in the position to review and monitor adequately the implementation and the progress of the programmes.

However some weaknesses have been found in relation to biosecurity measures, routine official confirmatory sampling is carried out in all cases of positive own-checks in breeders and laying hens, restrictive measures on table eggs are imposed only once the serotyping is available. The audit team also noted that although a central database exists, there is neither legal obligation nor procedures to register, therein, broiler holdings.

7 CLOSING MEETING

During the closing meeting held in Nicosia on 29 January 2014, the audit team presented the findings and preliminary conclusions of the audit to the CAs.

During this meeting, the CA acknowledged the FVO's main findings and preliminary conclusions presented by the audit team and provided a commitment to correct the deficiencies.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The CA 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 the deficiencies identified and in particular, the following recommendations:-

N°.	Recommendation
1.	The CA should ensure that FBOs of broiler holdings notify it of each establishment under its control in order to be registered, in compliance with Article 6.2 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and that procedures are in place for this purpose, as required by Article 31 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.
2.	The CA should ensure that adequate biosecurity standards are in place in all poultry farms, in compliance with EU legislation (point 4 (f) and (h), Part A (II), Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004) and in line with the SNCs.
3.	The CA should ensure that the monitoring and sampling programme applied in breeding flocks of <i>Gallus gallus</i> complies fully with the requirements of Regulations (EC) No 2160/2003 and (EU) No 200/2010, in particular regarding the official confirmatory sampling policy.
4.	The CA should ensure that the monitoring programme in laying flocks is fully compliant with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003, in particular concerning the rules for confirmatory sampling and measures taken once eggs are suspected of being infected with <i>Salmonella</i> serotypes.

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=2014-7154

ANNEX 1 - LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Dir. 2009/158/EC	OJ L 343, 22.12.2009, p. 74-113	Council Directive 2009/158/EC of 30 November 2009 on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in, and imports from third countries of, poultry and hatching eggs
Reg. 2160/2003	OJ L 325, 12.12.2003, p. 1-15	Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the control of salmonella and other specified food-borne zoonotic agents
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. 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
Reg. 183/2005	OJ L 35, 8.2.2005, p. 1-22	Regulation (EC) No 183/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 January 2005 laying down requirements for feed hygiene
Reg. 1003/2005	OJ L 170, 1.7.2005, p. 12-17	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1003/2005 of 30 June 2005 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 as regards a Community target for the reduction of the prevalence of certain salmonella serotypes in breeding flocks of Gallus gallus and amending Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003
Reg. 1168/2006	OJ L 211, 1.8.2006, p. 4-8	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1168/2006 of 31 July 2006 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 as regards a Community target for the reduction of the prevalence of certain salmonella serotypes in laying hens of Gallus gallus and amending Regulation (EC) No 1003/2005

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Reg. 584/2008	OJ L 162, 21.6.2008, p. 3-8	Commission Regulation (EC) No 584/2008 of 20 June 2008 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards a Community target for the reduction of the prevalence of Salmonella enteritidis and Salmonella typhimurium in turkeys
Reg. 200/2010	OJ L 61, 11.3.2010, p. 1-9	Commission Regulation (EU) No 200/2010 of 10 March 2010 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards a Union target for the reduction of the prevalence of Salmonella serotypes in adult breeding flocks of Gallus gallus
Reg. 517/2011	OJ L 138, 26.5.2011, p. 45-51	Commission Regulation (EU) No 517/2011 of 25 May 2011 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards a Union target for the reduction of the prevalence of certain Salmonella serotypes in laying hens of Gallus gallus and amending Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 200/2010
Reg. 200/2012	OJ L 71, 9.3.2012, p. 31-36	Commission Regulation (EU) No 200/2012 of 8 March 2012 concerning a Union target for the reduction of Salmonella enteritidis and Salmonella typhimurium in flocks of broilers, as provided for in Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council
Reg. 1190/2012	OJ L 340, 13.12.2012, p.29-34	Commission Regulation (EU) No 1190/2012 of 12 December 2012 concerning a Union target for the reduction of Salmonella Enteritidis and Salmonella Typhimurium in flocks of turkeys, as provided for in Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Text with EEA relevance)