

Response of the Competent Authorities of Malta to the recommendations of Report ref. DG(SANCO)/2013-6860-MR of an audit carried out on 22-31 January 2013 in order to evaluate the follow-up action taken by the competent authorities with regard to official controls related to the safety of food of animal origin, in particular meat, milk and their products

N°.	Recommendation	Action Proposed by the Competent Authority
1	To continue the efforts to recruit enough official staff to implement the programme of official controls as required by Article 4, point 2(c) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.	<p>Malta will continue to ensure recruitment of official staff. At present there are 23 Veterinary Officers within the Veterinary Regulation Directorate (VRD) and there is a rolling call throughout 2013. The first call has already been processed and 3 candidates have been selected from the first call. These candidates will be employed within the next weeks. Another call closed on 15 March 2013. The following calls are set to close on 14 June 2013; 13 September 2013; and 20 December 2013. It is envisaged that the vacant positions for Official Veterinarians within the VRD will be fulfilled by the end of processing of these rolling calls.</p> <p>The same applies for the Veterinary Support Officers. A call was issued on 13 November 2012 and interviews were held on 12 and 13 February 2013. There were 23 eligible applicants out of which 11 were successful during the interview and 5 of these successful candidates should be employed within the next weeks.</p>
2	To bring the approval procedure fully in line with the requirements in Article 31, point 2 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.	A new generic SOP on how to approve establishments that prepare food of animal origin has been prepared (a specific one is present for Fishing Vessels since these have different requirements compared to establishments

CA response received 08 May 2013

N°.	Recommendation	Action Proposed by the Competent Authority
		<p>manufacturing food of animal origin). Approval will be granted only if the Food Business Operator (FBO) has fulfilled all conditions that have to be met either on final audit or within the three plus three month period foreseen in the legislation.</p> <p>Please find attached document “Procedure for approval of new applicant” SOP/SFC/002/2013.</p>
3	<p>To ensure that the official controls are carried out regularly, on a risk basis taking into account the food business operator's past record as regard compliance or the reliability of own checks as required by Article 3(1) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.</p>	<p>Malta submitted the Risk Assessment on 20 December 2012 and this clearly takes in consideration past records and own checks. However, the frequency of the inspection is not dictated by these two parameters. The VRD has already undertaken the re-assessment of the plan of official controls by modifying the SOP named “Performing official controls in 853 approved establishments” as well as reassessing the risk. Establishments will receive a score and according to this they will be reassessed on a yearly basis.</p> <p>Please find enclosed a document entitled “Risk Categorisation of Food Establishments and Frequency for Official Controls” which outlines the re-organised risk assessment and frequencies.</p>
4	<p>To ensure that the official controls are carried out in accordance with the documented procedures that have been established in line with Article 8 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.</p>	<p>Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in line with Article 8 of Regulation (EC) 882/2004 are continuously under development. The SOP “Performing Official Controls in 853 Approved Establishments” has been modified in order to guarantee the consistency and the efficacy of the official controls.</p> <p>Please find attached version 2 of the above mentioned document entitled “Performing Official Controls in CR853 Approved Establishments”</p>

CA response received 08 May 2013

N°.	Recommendation	Action Proposed by the Competent Authority
		SOP/SFC/001/2012
5	To ensure that appropriate action is taken when non-compliances have been identified to ensure that the operator remedies the situation as required by Article 54 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.	An SOP on enforcement already exists entitled “Guidelines on Enforcement Actions”; SOP/SFC/001/2011; Issue No 1; Review Date 31/07/2013; Effective Date 01/08/2011. The Competent Authority will make sure that appropriate action is taken in line with the SOP contents in all the approved establishments. In relation to the Civil Abattoir, if required and as already carried out in the past, reduction or suspension of activity will be enforced until the Competent Authority is satisfied by the remedies carried out by the Operator.
6	To carry out a detailed analysis of the structural, maintenance and hygienic status of the old State owned slaughterhouse in order to establish a detailed and realistic action plan with clear deadlines so that the establishment can be brought fully in line with the requirements of Regulations (EC) No 852/2004 and (EC) No 853/2004 in a timely manner.	Please find attached a schedule of refurbishment works at the Civil Abattoir.
7	To ensure that cutting and boning of meat in the two State owned slaughterhouses is carried out fully in line with the requirements of Regulations (EC) No 852/2004 and (EC) No 853/2004.	The approval process can take place only after 90 days from and after presentation of a proper HACCP and full traceability system for the cutting and de-boning hall.
8	To ensure that food business operators comply with the relevant requirements of Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 in order to ensure that the microbiological criteria can be met. When necessary the food business operator must conduct shelf-life studies in line with the requirements in Article 3(2) of the Regulation.	Operators have been reminded once again about their obligations in relation to the adequate number of samples and appropriate number of tests to be carried out on their products. These recommendations refer also to the carrying out of shelf life studies. In particular a guidance document entitled “Listeria monocytogenes and Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005” has been prepared to further assist Official Veterinarians in carrying out their Official Controls in

CA response received 08 May 2013

MINISTRY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,  
THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

7 May 2013

N°.	Recommendation	Action Proposed by the Competent Authority
		<p>relation to the subject. A copy is being attached. At least two Official Veterinarians will be attending BTSF Training on microbiological criteria in 2013 and at least another two will be attending this same training during 2014.</p> <p>The Civil Abattoir is now regularly performing the necessary tests required in Regulation (EC) 2073/2005.</p>
9	<p>To ensure compliance with criteria for raw sheep and goat's milk laid down in Section IX of Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.</p>	<p>The criteria for raw sheep and goats milk laid down in Section IX of Annex III in Regulation (EC) 853/2004 are still under discussion with the Commission.</p> <p>Malta endeavours to regularise this issue as soon as discussions with the Commission are concluded.</p>