

Response of the Competent Authorities of Malta to the recommendations of Mission Report with reference DG (SANCO)/2010-8458-MR carried out from 17 to 21 May 2010 in order to evaluate the food safety control systems in place governing the production and placing on the market of poultry meat and the systems in place to control the *Salmonella* risk in poultry

Note: Abbreviations used are found at end of document.

No.	Recommendation	Action Proposed by the Competent Authority
1	The CA should ensure that official controls are carried out with an appropriate frequency based on risk analysis as required by Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 Article 3 point 1.	The frequency of sampling on farms for layer flocks has been in line with EU requirements since the second half of 2009. From October 2010, the frequency of sampling for broilers will be rectified to reflect all houses and, therefore, all flocks. The official control in establishments is already based on risk analysis and the frequency of the official controls will be maintained as indicted in the Salmonella National Control Programme (SNCP). The risk analysis for farms will be developed in the next year in view of the data obtained through the Salmonella Control Programme and will be included in the next Multi Annual National Control Programme (MANCP) which is due in 2011.
2	The CA should ensure the laboratories designated to carry out analyses of official samples are accredited in accordance with EN ISO/IEC 17025 as required by Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.	The accreditation of the National Veterinary Laboratory (NVL) will start at the end of 2010. The CA is awaiting a quotation by the Malta Standards Authority / National Accreditation Boards on the fees applicable for this accreditation. The accreditation process may last for a number of months.
3	The CCA should ensure that the laboratory involved in the SNCPs regularly participates in proficiency testing, particularly on faecal material, in line with Article 12 of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003.	To date 2 proficiency tests in line with Article 12 of Council Regulation (EC) 882/2004 have been carried out. These proficiency tests have been carried out with the Veterinary Laboratory Agency of the United Kingdom. The proficiency test carried out in May has given a satisfactory result, as per attached. The NVL is currently finalising a second proficiency test with the same agency.

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4	The CA should ensure that corrective action is taken when needed in accordance with Article 8.3 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.	Corrective actions are taken and will continue to be taken in accordance with Article 8.3 of Council Regulation (EC) 882/2004. Verification procedures will be improved to ensure that the Food Business Operations (FBOs) correct the deficiencies detected.
5	The CA should ensure that official controls are carried out on the farms to verify FBOs' compliance with the requirements of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 as required by Article 4.2 (a) of Regulation (EC) No 854/2004.	Official controls at farm level will be improved by the introduction of checklists for biosecurity and animal health and these controls will be adequately recorded on the farm's record book of each holding and in the relative records kept by the CA for each farm.
6	The CA should ensure that adequate bio-security standards are present in broilers and laying hen farms, in line with point 4(h), Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.	Broiler poultry farms are visited 5 times a year whilst layer farms are visited every 15 weeks. These visits concur with the sampling dates necessary for the SNCP. During these visits, other checks such as Animal welfare checks are carried out apart from sampling. The CA is producing a bio-security checklist and an Animal health checklist to be added on to the existing Animal welfare checklist to be used on these farms whenever visits are carried out. It is envisaged that these new bio-security and Animal health checklists will be in use on these farms by the end of October.
7	The CA should ensure that FBO own checks on <i>Salmonella</i> presence in poultry meat in SHs are in line with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005.	The OV's have issued corrective actions for operators for <i>Salmonella</i> testing in poultry slaughtering establishments. These corrective actions are being followed.
8	The CA should apply enforcement measures to ensure FBOs' compliance with the general requirements of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and with the specific requirements of Section II, Annex III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 as regards maintenance and GHP.	The shortcomings related to chemical analysis of waters in one specific establishment have also been noted and corrective action has been issued. The verification of this corrective action is in process. The references by the AT regarding maintenance were based on restricted areas of the plants visited, however the corrective actions requested are being followed.
9	The CA should ensure that food chain information contains the	The OV's responsible for white meat SH are informed through e-

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	<i>Salmonella</i> analysis results taken in the framework of the SNCP as required by Annex II, Section III, and paragraph 3(e) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.	mail and telephone communication by the NVL whenever broiler farms test positively for <i>Salmonella enteritidis</i> and <i>Salmonella typhimurium</i> . As from 1 October 2010, all test results will be communicated to the producers through normal mail and the OV's will check the <i>Salmonella</i> result sheet along with all the other controls already in place when verifying food chain information supplied through the FBO as required by Annex II, Section III, and paragraph 3(e) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004. Testing results are also being entered in the National Livestock Database (NLD) by the NVL which is then available to all users of the NLD at the CA.
10	The CA should ensure that monitoring and sampling programme in laying flocks fully comply with the requirements of Regulation (EC) Nos 2160/2003 and 1168/2006, correcting all non-conformities mentioned in this report.	The CA has already rectified the non-conformities related to the monitoring and sampling programme of day-old chicks and pullets which are currently in line and full compliance with the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) 2160/2003 and Commission Regulation (EC) 1168/2006. The flocks and houses monitoring and sampling programme was already in line with EU requirements by the second round of sampling in the second half of 2009 and throughout 2010. All houses and, therefore, flocks are being sampled.
11	The CA should consider reviewing the SNCP in laying hens to ensure that the strategy for vaccination respects the requirements in Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 1177/2006.	The CA will definitely consider reviewing the SNCP in laying hens if vaccination becomes necessary in line with the requirements of Article 3 of Commission Regulation (EC) 1177/2006. At present the positivity for <i>Salmonella enteritidis</i> and <i>Salmonella typhimurium</i> in layer flocks calculated on the basis of the individual houses on the holdings is less than 10%. There are 6 positive houses equivalent to 6 flocks out of the 102 flocks that are in production on 46 holdings. This adds up to a 5.9% of positive cases. The CA is, however, already viewing vaccination programmes that will have to be considered

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12	The CA should ensure that monitoring and sampling programme in broilers fully comply with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 and (EC) No 646/2007, correcting all non-conformities mentioned in this report.	if this positivity increases.  The sampling at farm level was always separated per house and per flock; the analysis of these samples was always carried out separately for layers. In broilers, the sampling will be rectified from 1 September 2010 and samples will be taken separately for all broiler houses and therefore flocks. Analysis will be carried out separately for each sample taken. The issues of re-sampling will be address in the QCS and the finalised version of this QCS is targeted by the end of September 2010.

Abbreviation	Explanation
AFRD	Agriculture and Fisheries Regulation Division
AHW	Animal Health and Welfare Unit
AT	Audit Team
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
CP	Cutting Plant
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
EC	European Community
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
EU	European Union
FBO	Food Business Operator
FCI	Food Chain Information
FSC	Food Safety Commission
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
GHP	Good Hygiene Practice
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points
MANCP	Multi-Annual National Control Plan
MRRA	Ministry of Resources and Rural Affairs
MS	Member States
NRL	National Reference Laboratory
NVL	National Veterinary Laboratory
OV	Official Veterinarian
PMP	Poultry meat products
PP	Processing Plant
SFC	Safety of the Food Chain Unit
SH	Slaughterhouse
SNCP	<i>Salmonella</i> National Control Programme
PVO	Principal Veterinary Officer

QCS	Quality Control Scheme
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