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FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT
CARRIED OUT IN
FINLAND
FROM 12 JANUARY 2015 TO 16 JANUARY 2015
IN ORDER TO
DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANIMAL WELFARE TRAINING
PROGRAMMES

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 audit took place in Finland from 12 to 16 January 2015 to determine the effectiveness and suitability of the activities to ensure staff looking after or handling farm animals possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence. The audit focussed on pig farming and the slaughterhouse sector.

The report concludes that knowledge of important aspects of animal welfare is delivered through vocational training and that as these qualifications require competence to be practically assessed this provides a good level of professionalism for those entering the different sectors.

The many activities which deal with animal welfare outside vocational training allow stockpersons and operators to update their knowledge and competence. Where the messages disseminated were clearly defined from the outset and with the agreement of the professional sector concerned there was a high level of stakeholder ownership. This best practice resulted in a good collaboration between producers and the CA, such as in the “pig project”, and brought about better compliance with some recurrent and problematic issues.

Suitable training is available for workers who are new to the slaughter industry via vocational qualifications, and additionally Food Business Operators provide their staff with continuous training. The CA developed and delivers examinations with the help of educational experts and, additional to EU requirements, experienced workers in Finland are also required to pass an examination before obtaining a certificate of competence.

The report makes no recommendations to the Finnish authorities.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Objectives	4
3	Legal Basis	5
4	Background	5
5	Findings and conclusions	5
5.1	training activities in the pig farming sector	5
5.2	training activities in the slaughterhouse sector	9
6	Overall conclusion	11
7	Closing Meeting	11

ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
AWO	Animal Welfare Officer
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
EC	European Community
ETT	Finnish Association for Animal Disease Prevention
EU	European Union
FBO	Food Business Operators
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
OV	Official veterinarian
WQ	Welfare Quality

1 INTRODUCTION

This audit took place in Finland from 12 to 16 January 2015 as part of the planned audit programme of the Food and Veterinary Office.

An opening meeting was held with the Competent Authorities (CAs) on 12 January. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the audit were confirmed by the mission team. The audit team comprised two auditors from the Food and Veterinary Office and one trainee and was accompanied throughout the audit by representatives from the CA.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the audit was to determine the effectiveness and suitability of the activities to ensure staff looking after or handling farm animals possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence.

The scope of the audit included the relevant activities in the pig farming and slaughterhouse sectors. The CA had been asked to select two sectors from the four (pigs, broilers, transport and slaughter) for which there are specific EU requirements regarding operator competence.

In pursuit of the objectives, the following meetings were held:

Meetings		Comments
Competent Authorities	3	As well as an opening and final meeting, a meeting took place with CA staff responsible for carrying out controls in slaughterhouses and pig farms.
Pig producers	6	A meeting with two groups of pig farmers (six in total) on the outcome of training and other related activities.
Slaughterhouse staff	7	A meeting on the impact of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, in particular the examination required for personnel involved in killing and related operations.
Trainers	2	A visit to one of the Agricultural Colleges providing vocational training to the pig sector at which representatives from an agricultural advisory body and from a University were also present. A meeting with a trainer providing the examination required by Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 was also held.
Representatives of quality schemes and industry bodies	1	A meeting with Association for Animal Disease Prevention, Finnish Transport and Logistics, Finnish Poultry Association, Pig producers Association, representative of slaughterhouses

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 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.

EU legal acts quoted in this report are provided in Annex I and refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

4 BACKGROUND

The EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015 (COM(2012) 6 final/2) was adopted in January 2012¹ indicated that one of the key issues which needed to be addressed was that many stakeholders lack sufficient knowledge about animal welfare. Subsequently a study on animal welfare education was launched to identify the animal welfare topics which should be included in the professional curricula of those involved with animals and which actions would be needed to improve awareness among those professions. This study should be finalised in 2015.

This series of FVO audits, of which this is the first, aims to identify activities that are suitable and effective in delivering high levels of knowledge and competence to the professional sectors on animal welfare, and therefore achieve a high level of compliance with animal welfare requirements.

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE PIG FARMING SECTOR

Legal requirements

Article 4 of Directive 98/58/EC requires Member States to ensure that the conditions under which animals are bred or kept comply with the provisions set out in the Annex of this Directive. These include, amongst other issues, that animals are cared for by a sufficient number of staff who possess the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional competence. In addition Article 6 (b) of Directive 2008/120/EC requires Member States to ensure that appropriate training courses are available, and such courses must focus on aspects of pig welfare.

Finding

1. The EU requirements are met for the pig sector in Finland through a combination of vocational training provided by over 20 establishments in Finland, where training for pig farming is an optional component of the qualifications, and many other activities which

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/actionplan/docs/aw_strategy_19012012_en.pdf

include training of pig stockpersons, notably a "pig project" organised by the Association of Finnish Pig Farmers in 2011.

Details of the vocational training and other activities are set out below.

Vocational training

2. Training relevant to animal welfare on pig farms is part of certain vocational qualifications. The Finnish board of education plans vocational qualifications, such as the one for a Vocational Qualification in Agriculture, primarily according to the needs of employers. The Finnish National Board of Education lays down the principles governing the various vocational qualifications. The training and completion of components of the vocational qualification are based on the requisite professional skills and the assessment criteria for each component. A tri-partite approach is then adopted to develop the qualification criteria involving employers, employees and teachers. These criteria are further developed in training modules. The Public employment office helps potential students to find suitable training and helps with language studies if necessary. An increasing number of workers on pig farms come from outside Finland.
3. Regarding the delivery of the training for a Vocational Qualification in Agriculture:
 - This is provided at two locations by the college visited and 10% of students had opted for modules relevant to pig farming.
 - The course booklet published by the board of education and the practical demonstrations include aspects where pig farming impacts on animal welfare.
 - There is a practical assessment of the “animal care and welfare” module which is undertaken following the tripartite approach involving teacher, employer and employee.
4. In order to ensure the quality of the vocational training:
 - The objectives for the training are expanded into criteria for both teaching and assessment and this provides those involved with clear standards which must be achieved.
 - The delivery of training is supervised by a qualification committee, composed of six to nine members. The members of qualification committees should represent employers, employees, teachers and, if they have independent professional activities that are significant in scope, also self-employed persons. Members of the committee have a three year contract with the training provider. This committee meets every two months, assesses student feedback, appoints and assesses assessors and also issues the qualification certificates.
 - The Board of Education had also evaluated the delivery of the Vocational Qualification in Agriculture and found that the students’ test results for "animal care and welfare" were the highest of all the modules taken.

Activities additional to vocational training

5. In 2010, the CCA organised an operational programme for the welfare of animals. The first CCA operational programme targeted calves, because CA inspections showed that the number of irregularities had remained at 25% for a number of years. The operational programme then targeted the welfare of pigs because inspections showed a high number of irregularities (about 30%) at pig holdings for several years in a row. The authorities sent all pig producers illustrated brochures, the content of which had been agreed with stakeholders, which went beyond strict legal requirements, e.g. the construction of buildings and how this is linked to achieving requirements, and on the watering and feeding of pigs. A document on how to make decisions regarding euthanasia of animals was sent to every pig producer in Finland. This linked euthanasia of sick pigs with responsible antibiotic usage and another document on the cleanliness of pigs dealt with the provision of manipulable material.
6. As part of its 2010-2014 project the pig sector took measures to promote the welfare of pigs. The project to promote the welfare of pigs, launched by the Association of Finnish Pig Farmers in 2010, also aimed to improve the image of the pig sector following a series of media exposés of the situation on certain pig farms. The project concentrated on training producers and key points included:
 - Mutual support between the authorities and the industry, with agreement on the measures on which to focus to achieve good animal welfare standards.
 - However, in all of the above projects there has been significant, mutually supportive cooperation between the authorities and the industry.
 - The CA decided to explain more clearly and thoroughly to operators the reasons behind legislative requirements and their link to animal welfare. To increase producers' motivation to meet the requirements.
 - The Finnish Association for Animal Disease Prevention (ETT) trained veterinarians responsible for monitoring healthcare, who promoted “Welfare Quality®” and many of the trainers became certified WQ trainers.
 - The representatives of the pig sector met by the audit team appreciated and had used the “welfare quality” approach, and also appreciated more information on animal behaviour from documents such as “eye on the pig”.
7. There were some 80 roadshows between 2011 and 2013, which comprised a wide range of events attended by 4,000 people (those responsible for 90% of the pig production were represented) and where the training was given by specialised lecturers focusing on the welfare of pigs and use of medicines.
8. Video material is available on various internet sites such as a mock inspection (albeit developed for a cattle farm) so that producers know what to expect during an inspection, and also on technical aspects such as killing both pigs and cattle on farm.
9. Advisory bodies in the pig sector also provide literature and are active with farmer groups to look at specific issues relevant to animal welfare.

10. There are several indicators of positive developments for animal welfare as a result of the various activities:

- The result of official controls indicates a downward trend in non-compliances. Most of these are risk based checks and may not be representative of the farm population but nevertheless there has been a consistent fall in the level of non-compliance since the CCA's targeted programme of official controls and the pig project.
- All the producers met were operating under a Government welfare support scheme, and although not all of Finland's pig producers are part of this scheme, it has attracted 750 applicants, and checks under this scheme indicates the standards of animal welfare are above the legal minimum.
- Nearly all pig producers belong to the Finnish Association for Animal Disease Prevention (ETT) pig healthcare monitoring system. The ETT vets pay health care visits to farms on a regular basis, up to fortnightly, and reported improvements in producers' know-how in relation to many animal welfare issues. ETT keeps in contact with the CA and also do animal welfare assessments using both animal based indicators and meat inspection data and publish reports indicating the overall results. These also indicate improvements in the situation on pig farms.
- All the producers met by the audit team were positive about the outcome of the "pig project" and found that the contents of training such as behavioural indicators and decision making on killing animals were useful. There had been greater innovation by producers as a result of this project to solve problems such as provision of manipulable material.
- The producers met indicated that while they were somewhat sceptical of the role of the CA at the launch of the pig project, they now appreciated more the advice from the CA as in collaborating with them they had found that they provided more than strict enforcement.

Conclusion on training activities in the pig farming sector

11. Several aspects of the "pig project" represent best practice as suitable and effective activities to ensure pig stockpersons possess appropriate knowledge on animal welfare. The collaborative approach adopted from its inception and the targeted approach in dealing with problems has resulted in a high degree of satisfaction on the outcome for both the stakeholders and the CA which has resulted in more widespread use of animal behaviour to identify animal welfare problems and improve standards.

12. There is a continuous level of training available via the vocational qualifications, which includes aspects of EU animal welfare legislation, and there are also many activities outside vocational training which allow stockpersons to update their knowledge and competence on animal welfare.

5.2 TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE SECTOR

Legal requirements

Article 21 (a) and (c) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 requires Member States to designate a CA to ensure that training courses are available for personnel involved in killing and related operations and to approve these training programmes and the content and modalities of the examination.

Findings

13. Vocational qualifications cover all slaughter operations laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, and such training is a requirement for workers without the requisite work experience. The skills required for the killing of production animals are included in the vocational qualification for meat processors (the section on slaughtering) and the vocational qualification for the meat industry (the section on red meat and poultry slaughtering).
14. Workers with at least three years professional experience have been certified using the simplified procedure allowed by Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009. Workers in Finland who obtain their certificates on the basis of experience are required to pass a written examination on the legislative requirements; this is above the legal minimum. The CA has approved the content and modalities of the examination which leads to the certificate of competence.

Details of the vocational training and other activities are set out below.

15. The Finnish board of education provides for relevant vocational training, and as was the case in the farming sector these courses are developed and delivered primarily according to the needs of employers, with a tri-partite approach involving also employees and teachers.
 - A trainer from an institute delivering such training indicated that the guides for good practice for slaughter of cattle, pig and poultry were useful reference material.
 - Vocational qualifications require a practical assessment where each student plans this demonstration to show they know what to do at each stage of the slaughter process.
 - The Finnish board of education monitors the completion of qualifications via its qualification committees.
16. The extent to which the CA is involved in the training taking place at slaughterhouses on handling and slaughter of animals, which is run by the food business operators (FBOs) and industry, is variable. The CA indicated that there is a lot of variability as the number and quality of training activities varies considerably according to the size and resources of the slaughterhouse, and commitment of the FBO. OVs from three slaughterhouses interviewed by the audit team indicated they were involved to very different extents in the provision and assessment of training.
17. One of the OVs interviewed and who was involved in training at slaughterhouse level indicated that the guide for good practice was a useful reference document. However the

FBO staff met, the majority were Animal Welfare Officers (AWOs), considered these guides too academic and of limited use, in particular that there was insufficient guidance to help them implement the AWO function. Some AWOs did refer to the European Commission's brochure "The animal welfare officer in the EU" which is available on the CA's website and indicated this provides some guidance on the role of the AWO.

18. The representatives of the CA, trainers and FBO staff all indicated that there is an increasing demand for training on animal welfare at slaughter with entry into force of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009. The CA is in the planning stage regarding such training².
19. The institute involved in vocational training also had a contract to deliver the examination needed to obtain a certificate of competence. The CA and FBOs were consulted at the design stage of the examination.
20. The examination for each slaughter sector follows the same format and consists of 40 true/false statements which are representative of the categories specified in Annex IV of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009. The FBO staff met by the audit team considered that such a written test was of much lower value compared to a practical test of competence. The purpose of this exam, as explained by the CA, was to raise awareness of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 among those benefiting from the simplified procedure to obtain their certificates of competence.
21. The CA doesn't have a system for collating and analysing the results of official controls in slaughterhouses, and the outcome of controls are only available at each slaughterhouse. The checklist in use for official controls contains a question on staff competence but this, as is also the case for CA controls in general, hasn't been revised to take account of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009³.
22. The CCA did not have an overview of the numbers of certificates of competence issued or whether there were problems with the competence of staff in slaughterhouses, as the situation at each slaughterhouse is followed by the local competent authorities. The central level of the CA obtained data from slaughterhouses for the purposes of this audit indicating that 1 in 4 slaughterhouse staff need to undergo training as well as the examination and some 172 have already undergone the examination⁴.

² *In their response to the draft report the Competent Authorities noted that: "training in preparation for a vocational qualification or components thereof has been available since the Regulation entered into force. Tailor-made training courses consisting of smaller units will start during 2015."*

³ *In their response to the draft report the Competent Authorities noted that: "The information system used by Evira and the Regional State Administrative Agencies is being updated and for the time being, as regards slaughterhouses, only includes the results of animal transport inspections. A tool for entering and analysing the animal welfare inspections carried out by slaughterhouses will be developed next and should be introduced at the end of 2016. The check-list for the animal welfare inspections of slaughterhouses has not yet been updated. The form will be updated during 2015 and introduced in the new Elvi information system".*

⁴ *In their response to the draft report the Competent Authorities noted that: "Evira and the Regional State Administrative Agencies have agreed that in spring 2015 the Agencies will check which qualifications are lacking at each individual slaughterhouse in their region"*

Conclusion on training activities in the slaughterhouse sector

23. Vocational training is required for workers without sufficient work experience and the CA has availed of the simplified procedure to grant certificates of competence to experienced workers, albeit with an additional examination for these workers to raise their awareness of the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009. There is a system in place to evaluate vocational qualifications, but the CCA did not have oversight of the extent to which slaughterhouse staff been certified as competent to carry out their tasks.
24. In the design and delivery of the examinations required for the provision of certificates of competence, the CA made use of existing educational structures and expertise. The CA went beyond the legal minimum in requiring this examination for experienced workers, but those carrying out operations in slaughterhouses found this exam of limited value.

6 OVERALL CONCLUSION

Knowledge of important aspects of animal welfare is delivered through vocational training and competence is practically assessed as part of these qualifications, both of which provide a good level of professionalism for those entering the different sectors.

The many activities which deal with animal welfare outside vocational training allow stockpersons and operators to update their knowledge and competence. Where the messages disseminated were clearly defined from the outset and with the agreement of the professional sector concerned there was a high level of stakeholder ownership. This best practice resulted in a good collaboration between producers and the CA, such as in the “pig project”, and brought about better compliance with some recurrent and problematic issues.

Suitable training is available for workers who are new to the slaughter industry via vocational qualifications, and additionally Food Business Operators provide their staff with continuous training. The CA developed and delivers examinations with the help of educational experts and, additional to EU requirements, in Finland experienced workers are also required to pass an examination before obtaining a certificate of competence.

7 CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 16 January with representatives of the CA, at which the main findings and conclusions of the audit were presented by the audit team.

ANNEX 1 – LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
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. 1/2005	OJ L 3, 5.1.2005, p. 1-44	Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97
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
Dir. 2008/120/EC	OJ L 47, 18.2.2009, p. 5-13	Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs
Dec. 2006/778/EC	OJ L 314, 15.11.2006, p. 39-47	2006/778/EC: Commission Decision of 14 November 2006 concerning minimum requirements for the collection of information during the inspections of production sites on which certain animals are kept for farming purposes