EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate F - Food and Veterinary Office

DG(SANCO)/7617/2005 – MR Final

FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION

CARRIED OUT IN LATVIA

FROM 7 TO 17 NOVEMBER 2005

IN ORDER TO REVIEW THE UP-GRADING OF CERTAIN CLASSES OF FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS, CONTROLS OVER CERTAIN PRODUCTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN INTENDED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION, CERTAIN LIVE ANIMAL CONTROLS, AND CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR EPIZOOTIC DISEASES

Please note that factual errors in the draft report have been corrected.

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ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

ABP	Animal by-products
AI	Avian Influenza
CA(s)	Competent Authority (Authorities)
CCA(s)	Central Competent Authority (Authorities)
CDB	Central Database
CFT	Complement Fixation Test
CPs	Contingency Plans
CRL	Community Reference Laboratory
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DVI	Danish Veterinary Institute
EBL	Enzootic Bovine Leucosis
ESOC	Emergency Situations Operational Committee
EU	European Union
FMD	Foot-and-Mouth Disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
FVS	Food and Veterinary Service
HACCP	Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
ND	Newcastle Disease
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
OIE	*Office International des Epizooties*
RBT	Rose Bengal Test
RVS	Regional Veterinary Services
SESOC	State Emergency Situations Operational Committee
SVMDC	State Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Centre
TAIEX	Technical Assistance Information Exchange Office
TB	Tuberculosis

1. INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Latvia from 7 to 17 November 2005. The mission team comprised 2 inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in the first week of the mission and 3 inspectors during the second week of the mission. In addition, one observer from the EFTA Surveillance Authority joined the mission during the second week.

The mission was undertaken as part of the FVO's planned mission programme.

The inspection team was accompanied during the mission by representatives from the Central Competent Authority (CCA), the Food and Veterinary Service (FVS, *Pârtikas Veterinâirais Dienst*) of Latvia.

An opening meeting was held on 7 November 2005 in Riga with the CCA. At this meeting, the objectives of, and itinerary for, the mission were confirmed by the inspection team, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the mission requested.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The objectives of the mission were to review:

- the follow-up action taken by the CCA with regard to the up-grading of certain classes of food-processing establishments (red meat and milk);
- the operation of controls over certain products of animal origin intended for human consumption (fresh meat, meat products, minced meat and meat preparations, milk and milk products, farmed game and wild game);
- holding registration, animal identification and movement controls;
- certain animal health controls (tuberculosis, brucellosis, classical swine fever, enzootic bovine leucosis and rabies);
- the contingency plans for epizootic diseases, in particular Classical Swine Fever (CSF), Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Avian Influenza (AI), Newcastle Disease (ND).

In pursuit of this objective, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authority	Central	4	FVS for the opening and closing meetings, the State Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Centre
	Regional	5	Regional Veterinary Offices, which also acts as Local Disease Control Centres
	Local	14	At the establishments and farms visited, staff employed at regional level

FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS		Comments
Slaughterhouses	2	1 high capacity, 1 low capacity
Cutting premises	3	All integrated, 2 high capacity, 1 low capacity
Meat product premises	4	All integrated, all high capacity
Milk processing premises	2	High capacity
Laboratories	1	National reference laboratory
Live animal control sites		
Farms	6	Cattle, pigs, poultry and mixed farms
Cattle dealer (assembly centre)	1	Selling calves to other MS

3. LEGAL BASIS

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular:

Article 12 of Council Directive 64/433/EEC, Article 12 of Council Directive 77/99/EEC, Article 15 of Council Directive 91/495/EEC, Article 12 of Council Directive 92/45/EEC, Article 17 of Council Directive 92/46/EEC, Article 9 of Council Directive 94/65/EC, Article 10 of Council Directive 77/391/EEC, Article 14 of Council Directive 93/119/EC, Article 22 of Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Article 21 of Council Directive 2001/89/EC, Article 7 of Council Directive 91/494/EEC, Article 18 of Council Directive 92/40/EEC, Article 22 of Council Directive 92/66/EEC, Commission Decision 98/139/EC.

References to relevant Community legislation in the framework of this mission are listed in Annex I to the report.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1. Competent authority performance

The structure of the Competent authority (CA) remains unchanged since mission DG(SANCO)/7174/2004[1] last year. In response to recommendations made following this mission, the CCA gave satisfactory assurances. Since March 2005, checklists, guidelines and instructions are available through the intranet of the FVS. The official website of the FVS can be found at: http://www.pvd.gov.lv/. Specific information relating to animal identification can be found at the official website of the Agricultural Data Centre at: http://www.ldc.gov.lv.

Training is compulsory for all official veterinarians according to an annually approved programme. Authorised veterinarians have mandatory training once every two years.

[1] A copy of the report may be consulted on http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fvo/index_en.htm

An exhaustive quality management system is in place within the FVS. An audit system is also in place to ensure that the quality management system is operational in all parts of the veterinary services.

Observations:

- The present audit is largely desk based and does not normally include checks of the performance of the officials at field level ("reality checks"). Some controls of the performance of officials are, however, carried out and it has recently been decided that a specific system for professional supervision of veterinarians carrying out official duties will be implemented. The responsibility will lie with the Heads of the regional veterinary services;

- The frequency of supervision of the various types of establishments and farms did, in most cases, meet the targets set;

- Sometimes the time used for supervision of a particular "object" was comparatively short compared to the size or complexity of that "object" and the official tasks to be performed (for example, 3 hours in total time for a quarterly inspection of a rather complex meat plant);

- A database is in place for inspection and other reports concerning food establishments sent from the regional services to the CCA.

4.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

According to the CCA, all holdings for relevant species are registered in the Central Database (CDB). Latvian Regulation 712 from 2003 of the Cabinet of Ministers on registering animals, herds and holdings and tagging of animals transposes some parts of the relevant Community legislation. It contains detailed provisions for the various species regarding the applicable types of marking, farm registers and notifications within seven days of events related to animals. This also includes the requirement for notification of abortions.

Observations:

- Information from the CCA indicates that the situation as regards notifications has improved, but there is still a substantial number of late notifications of events from keepers to the CDB;

- Notifications have, at present, to be done in paper format but electronic transmission (e-mail, internet) is planned to be available as early as 2006;

- An approved cattle dealer visited was not flagged as such in the CDB and there was no clear link in the CDB to another holding present on the same site. In addition, there were no animals present on the holding despite the printout from the CDB indicating 44 animals present;

- The CDB printouts from a pig farm visited showed that the number of pigs had been entered in the CDB in such a way that the data referred to the wrong month.

4.2.1. Inspection of holdings

A system of documented on-farm controls is in place. These controls often include other elements such as animal welfare, veterinary medicines, feed, milk hygiene etc. The Regional veterinary services have, at present, only read access to the CDB, but it is planned that from 2006 they will be able to enter data from animal health and animal identification inspections.

The target of checking 20% of the holdings every year was met for 2004. Sanctions, including a ban on movements, can be applied in cases where non-conformities are detected. The selection of farms to be inspected is done with the help of a specific software tool. However, other criteria are also taken into account (results of earlier inspections, late notifications).

Observations:

- The print outs from the CDB used during on-farm controls were in some cases 1-2 months old (the CCA indicated that immediate corrective action will be taken);

- There were rarely any comments made in the protocols when there were discrepancies regarding the number of animals between CDB, farm register and reality;

- Sometimes the time used for controls was limited in relation to the tasks to be performed and it was sometimes admitted that only a sample of the animals were checked (for example, one hour in total time for an on-farm inspection also covering other areas, in a farm with 112 bovines);

- The data received concerning discrepancies found and sanctions/penalties imposed as well as findings during the mission, indicates that there are variations between the regions in respect of the performance of the on-farm controls and on how or if sanctions are imposed as foreseen in Commission Regulation (EC) No. 494/98.

4.3. Establishment upgrading and approval

At the time of the mission there were nine establishments present on the transitional list with a deadline of 31 December 2005. The approval process included an evaluation by authorised experts from a different region and/or the CCA. Order No. 58 of 15 March 2004 foresees monthly supervision by the CA on establishments granted a transitional period.

Observations:

- Four of the nine establishments on the present list of establishments in a transitional period were low capacity establishments;

- One establishment without a transitional period was undergoing serious reconstruction after an FVO visit in November 2004. The deadline set for the remaining construction work is 31 December 2006;

- Five upgraded establishments were visited. In general they were compliant, apart from one low capacity establishment where major deficiencies regarding maintenance (flaking paint, rust, cracked tiles, wooden materials) and cleaning were detected;

- One establishment visited which had a transitional period until 31 December 2005 was undergoing reconstruction work. The plans did not include the changing rooms and rooms for storage of spices and cardboard boxes, which were in very poor condition (evidence of corrective actions taken by the CA was presented at the final meeting);

- In one case, inspection protocols had not been filled out during a monthly inspection at the transitional establishment visited.

4.4. Food safety controls

4.4.1. Inspection tasks

The ante-mortem inspection and post-mortem inspection of animals are carried out by official veterinarians. In low capacity establishments these tasks would normally be carried out by State authorised veterinarians. Under Latvian law, all carcases of swine (domestic, farmed game and wild game) must be examined for trichinosis in an approved laboratory.

Observations:

- Ante-mortem and post-mortem records were generally in compliance with Council Directive 64/433/EEC;

- The provisions of Council Directive 77/96/EEC as transposed into Latvian legislation were not fully respected as regards the concentration of Hydrochloric acid, the size and condition of the mesh and the storage of pepsin (the CA took immediate corrective action);

- There were forty-eight cases of trichinosis in humans this year so far, according to information from CCA. The trace back to the source of origin revealed that meat from wild boars and domestic swine had been sold illegally, without any veterinary inspection. None of the reported cases were traced back to inspected carcasses.

4.4.2. Hygiene requirements

The hygiene requirements were largely complied with in the majority of the establishments visited, but in several cases, the following deficiencies, in most cases not detected by the official veterinarians, were observed in individual establishments:

- Inadequate maintenance and insufficient cleaning of facilities and equipment;

- Poor housekeeping with the presence of wooden pallets and cardboard boxes in clean areas combined with condensation problems, sometimes over exposed products. (Evidence of corrective action initiated by the CA was presented at the final meeting);

- Returned products were boiled and subsequently used as raw material for second class sausages. (The CA took immediate action in order to put procedures in place to control the situation);

- Presence in production areas of rusty (old) equipment;

- The protection of ingoing and outgoing products in dispatch/reception areas was not always sufficient.

4.4.3. HACCP and own check controls

The mission team checked a number of parameters in relation to own checks and HACCP.

Observations:

- HACCP systems were in place in the establishments visited. In one case, the component relating to corrective action in the HACCP plan needed to be further developed;

- Controls on raw milk quality were performed as foreseen in Council Directive 92/46/EEC;

- The number of samples taken for bacteriological checks on carcasses was in accordance with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC and when a deviation was noted by the mission team, the CA could demonstrate that corrective action had been taken. The standards laid down for interpretation of results when using the destructive method were, however, also used when sampling with swabs;

- The parameters checked and the number of samples taken for microbiological sampling of meat preparations was, in one case, very low and not in line with Council Directive 94/65/EC. (The CCA later informed that corrective action had been initiated and samples had been taken after the visit).

4.4.4. Health marking and traceability

A system for traceability of products was in place in the establishments visited.

Observations:

- When checked, the eligibility of raw materials was in conformity with Community legislation;

- Beef labels checked contained the information foreseen in Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000;

- In one establishment, old labels and synthetic casings were found without a health mark. (The CCA later informed the mission team that these labels and casings had been destroyed).

4.5. Animal welfare at slaughter

The mission team checked the application of Council Directive 93/119/EC in relation to animal welfare during slaughter in the two slaughterhouses visited.

Observations:

- In both slaughterhouses spare stunning equipment was available but in one case not readily available. In one slaughterhouse visited the pigs did not have access to water. In both cases the CA took immediate corrective action.

4.6. Animal health controls

A "National Surveillance Plan for Infectious Diseases of Animals" is issued every year by the FVS, providing the estimated number of animals to be tested according to the current epidemiological situation. The plan is then adapted and implemented by the Regional Veterinary Services (RVS).

The RVS employ private veterinarians (State authorised veterinarians) to carry out testing in the holdings, on the basis of the information included in the CDB. Samples are sent directly to the diagnostic laboratory, supported by documents automatically generated by the software system for animal health.

Eradication programmes in Latvia have been in place for decades. No cases of bovine tuberculosis (TB), bovine brucellosis and ovine brucellosis have been notified for a long time. Nevertheless, herds have not been declared officially free. The procedure to be granted the status is now in preparation and the required documentation is expected to be sent to the Commission at the beginning of next year.

Pre-movement testing is applied when regular testing has not been done in the 30 days before movement.

4.6.1. Eradication and surveillance programmes

Bovine tuberculosis

In January 2005 a new order was issued on the TB surveillance programme. The programme is now in line with the requirements of Council Directive 64/432/EEC with regards to testing procedures, interpretation of reactions and standards for tuberculin. All bovine animals over 6 weeks of age will be tested once per year in mixed holdings and once every second year in holdings with only bovine animals.

Bovine brucellosis

All animals over 24 months of age must be tested annually in 20% of the bovine holdings. The holdings to be tested are selected by the RVS, according to criteria set out in the national guidelines and taking into account that in five years all holdings in the region must be tested.

The Rose Bengal Test (RBT) is used as screening and the Complement Fixation Test (CFT) for individual testing. In 2005, 4 samples were found positive after the RBT and were tested with CFT giving negative results.

Notification of abortion is compulsory. In 2005, 585 aborting cows were investigated serologically for *B. abortus*. The bacteriological analysis of the foetus will be carried out only on the grounds of suspicion of brucellosis. In 2005, nine aborted foetuses were examined in the State Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Centre (SVMDC), with negative results.

Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL)

The animal incidence of EBL in 2004 was 0,28% at national level. All animals over 24 months of age must be tested annually and slaughtered if found positive.

If a reactor is disclosed, the owner is notified in writing, specifying the following conditions to be complied with:

- Reactors must be slaughtered within 30 days
- Ban on animal movements, except for slaughter
- Milk from reactors cannot be delivered to dairies
- Slaughtered animals must be notified.

Follow-up testing is also carried out. Compensation will only be granted if the animal is slaughtered within the time limit.

No pathological lesions have been sent so far to the SVMDC. The CA explained that considering the current system of testing and slaughter, the animals are supposed to be sent to slaughter before they can develop lesions.

Ovine brucellosis

According to the programme, 5% of the animal population over 12 months of age are tested annually for *Brucella melitensis*. In addition, all reproductive males are tested for *Brucella ovis* once a year. No information is available on the number of aborting sheep tested serologically for *B. melitensis*.

Classical Swine Fever (CSF)

A surveillance programme is in place for domestic pigs and wild boars. The number of animals to be tested per year is established in the National Surveillance Plan and implemented by the RVS. Vaccination ceased in 1998 (domestic pigs) and 2001 (feral pigs).

According to information received from the CCA a ban on swill feeding in line with Council Directive 2001/89/EC has been in place since 6 April 2004 and checks are included in the controls carried out both at establishment level and at farms.

Rabies

A number of 276 rabies cases (all species included) were declared in 9 months of 2005. With the assistance of Community funding, an oral vaccination

campaign for wild animals has been implemented in 15 regions in the western parts of the country since the beginning of the year. Out of 215 samples from foxes and racoon dogs tested for the presence of tetracycline in the bones, 129 were positive (60%). 209 samples were examined for antibodies with 116 positive (55,5%). 6 samples were positive to virus detection.

The CA informed the mission team that for 2006 the oral vaccination campaign will be extended to the remaining regions.

Observations:

- When checked by the mission team, the number of animals tested was in compliance with the estimated number foreseen in the annual plan;

- The notification of all abortions to the CA is compulsory under national legislation. Sampling for Brucellosis will only be done in the case of a motivated suspicion;

- With regard to TB:

  The new protocol for TB testing is in compliance with Council Directive 64/432/EEC. Nevertheless, the mission team noted that:

  - The old tuberculin which was not in compliance (see mission report DG (SANCO)/7174/2004) was still used in one region visited;

  - In one region, protocols prepared on-farm by a State veterinarian stated "negative" without indicating the actual measurement.

- With regard to EBL eradication programme:

  - On several occasions, animals positive for EBL were not slaughtered within the period laid down in the instruction (30 days). In most cases the delay exceeded 6-9 months and occasionally it could be several years. The CA explained that, in this case, the herd would be restricted, but the RVS has no legal power to compulsory slaughter the animals;

  - The follow-up of EBL positive animals was not always done correctly. In one case the sampling was not done within the acceptable time frame, and in another, not all susceptible animals in the holding were sampled. In one case the follow-up test was not documented.

4.7. Contingency Plans

4.7.1. Plan Documentation

4.7.1.1. Diseases covered

The Contingency Plans (CPs) for FMD and CSF were approved by Commission Decisions 2004/435/EC and 2004/431/EC. The CPs for AI and ND were approved by Commission Decision 2004/402/EC. CPs have also been prepared for Blue Tongue, African Horse Sickness and Swine Vesicular Disease.

According to legal provisions, the CPs have to be updated annually. Since the approval by the Commission, there have been three revisions of the plans concerning the list of staff involved at regional and central level, the relevant contacts and the list of commercial poultry holdings. The up-to-date list of other holdings is being prepared.

Observations:

- The CPs were, in general, well structured and contained the general provisions for controlling outbreaks of infectious diseases. However, the FMD plan has not been amended to include all elements of Council Directive 2003/85/EC, which has only recently been transposed;

- CPs were available in all the regional veterinary offices and slaughterhouses visited and were duly updated with most of the necessary local information (contacts, telephone numbers, staff). Nevertheless, the local information was not always kept in a systematic and easily accessible format.

4.7.1.2. Content of plans

The contingency plans for CSF, FMD, AI and ND are based on a national template and basically composed of three sections. Firstly a general part detailing the structure and organisation of all the bodies involved as well as providing contact lists of persons and institutions involved in outbreak at regional and district level and lists of equipment. Secondly, a manual, which provides instructions on notification of diseases, the forms to be used and guidelines on disinfection and humane killing. Thirdly, the specific part related to the individual disease.

Observations:

- The CPs provide Manuals of Procedures and separate instructions on eradication of the various diseases. Provisions for the National Reference Laboratory are also included in the CP.

4.7.2. Legal provisions and emergency powers

The main legal provision for the CPs is the "Law on Veterinary Medicine" which lays down the obligations of the state institutions and local community bodies in the case of an outbreak. The chain of command and the tasks and responsibilities of the various institutions are also described in the CPs.

4.7.3. Organisation (suspicion and following confirmation of disease)

The National Disease Control Centre (NDCC) is located at the central office of the FVS and is chaired by the CVO. The CVO is responsible for making the decision for disease eradication, for coordination of activities and establishment of protection and surveillance zones.

Besides the NDCC, the State Emergency Situations Operational Committee (SESOC) is responsible for the operational management of major emergency

situations at regional and national levels, by involving the resources of the state institutions, municipalities and other relevant institutions (i.e. civil protection, army, fire brigades). The SESOC is chaired by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The LDCCs are located at each of the responsible regional veterinary office and are chaired by the Head of the RVS. The LDCC will be responsible for notification of outbreaks, organisation of sampling, epidemiological investigations and restriction on holdings.

Besides the LDCC, the Emergency Situations Operational Committee (ESOC) at regional level will be responsible for the organization of measures in relation to the wider consequences resulting from the outbreak of the disease.

Observations:

- General guidelines on burning and burying of carcasses are provided in the manuals. However, authorised burial sites (except pet cemeteries) do not exist in the regions. The CA stated that the preferred method for disposal of carcases will be rendering. The availability and capacity of the different rendering facilities (2 are attached to integrated poultry units, 1 (in Latvia) is in the process of being renovated and 1 in Lithuania) have not been described in the manuals;

- General guidelines on the humane killing of animals are provided in the manuals. Nevertheless, no information is provided with regard to resources (skilled personnel and/or equipment or specific drugs needed) and possible practical procedures for slaughtering of animals;

- For poultry, the CA stated that gas and/or electrocution will be used for slaughter. A private company would be contacted to take care of this on behalf of the veterinary services. However, names/addresses of private companies to be contacted/contracted and details of the killing method (gas/electrocution, containers, trained staff etc.) to be used were not available at regional level.

4.7.4. Provision of resources

Financial resources necessary for the management of emergency situations are allotted from the emergency reserve fund provided for in the state budget. Resources for compensation for slaughtering of animals are made available in the framework of the "Law of Veterinary Medicine" and actual values for compensation are detailed in the Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers No 177, 13 March 2005, "Procedure according to which compensations are given or owner of animals receive compensations for losses which have arisen due to eradication of epizootics or animal infectious diseases" and also included in CPs.

The CPs provide a list of emergency equipment to be kept in each Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) and a list of further equipment stored under the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior.

Observations:

- Emergency kits in the RVS were found to be in compliance with the provisions of the plans, apart from some disposable equipment (syringes, vaccutainers etc), which did not always match the quantity listed in the CP. Specific sampling equipment for poultry was also provided;

4.7.4.1. Laboratories

The SVMDC is the only authorised institution to examine former list A infectious animal diseases. The Animal Diseases Diagnostic Laboratory of the SVMDC is accredited according to the standard LVS EN ISO/IEC 17025. The serological and virological tests are carried out in compliance with the relevant *Office International des Epizooties* (O.I.E.) standards.

Observations:

- The laboratory staff have been trained in the reference laboratories of the O.I.E. and the European Union, as well as within different collaboration projects;

- The laboratory participates regularly in ring-tests organised by the relevant Community Reference Laboratories (CRLs);

- In the CPs, the possibility of processing an increased number of samples in case of suspected/confirmed outbreaks is not envisaged. In such a case, the SVMDC will send samples to the Danish Veterinary Institute (DVI), according to a specific agreement. The possibility of sending samples for confirmation of diagnosis to CRLs is also foreseen in the CPs.

4.7.4.2. Animal tracing – pre and post outbreak

Databases for all holdings of cattle, sheep, goat, pigs and poultry are in place as described in section 4.2. The traceability system also consists of records, farm registers and movement documents. Geographical coordinates are assigned to holdings and the CA could demonstrate on a computerised map where the individual holdings were located.

Observations:

- A list of commercial poultry farms is available on-line for each region, but the list does not contain information on backyard flocks, which needs to be collected manually;

- The number of late notifications to the database indicates that this tool will be of limited use during an outbreak.

4.7.5. Provisions for emergency vaccination

Some general considerations on vaccination are included in the manuals. For CSF, vaccines will be made available from the Community stocks of vaccines, according to Commission Decision 2004/571/EC.

Observations:

- With the exception of CSF, no information on the quantity of vaccine estimated to be required, or the availability is provided.

4.7.6. Training and awareness of programmes, simulation

Simulation exercises have been carried out by FVS in 2001 for FMD, and in co-operation with TAIEX in 2002 for CSF and in 2004 for AI. Information and updating on CPs and infectious diseases are part of the periodical training for Official Veterinarians.

In the field of poultry diseases, several training sessions concerning AI and ND have been organised, for different categories of professionals at both national and regional level. The mission team also found evidence of information (instructions, leaflets, newspapers etc.) sent to municipalities, farmers, poultry breeders associations and the public.

5. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 17 November 2005 with the CCA. At this meeting, the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The representatives of the CCA took note of these and expressed their intention to correct the shortcomings observed that had not already been corrected.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Competent authority performance

In general, the control system put in place by the CCA was found to be comprehensive and audits against the quality management system are being carried out as documentary checks at regional level. A system for controls of the performance of the officials at field level has just being introduced and some improvements in the reporting system are foreseen for 2006.

The variations noted as regards official controls indicate that the controls are not always carried out in a consistent and effective way.

6.2. Holding registration, animal identification and movement controls

A system for holding registration, animal identification and movement controls is in place and the national bovine database is accessible by the veterinary services. Despite the fact that progress was noted in this sector during the mission, the traceability of bovine animals within the database as required by Regulation (EC) No, 1760/2000 cannot be guaranteed, mainly due to the problems with late notifications.

The results of on-farm inspections required by Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003 were not always properly documented and the time used for controls was rather limited.

6.3. Establishment upgrading and approval

In general, the situation as regards the up-grading process of establishments has improved and most establishments visited were generally compliant with the relevant Community legislation. However, one establishment visited which had not been in a transitional period has been given a deadline of 31.12.2006 for completion of a general refurbishment of parts of the production areas and a low capacity establishment was found to have severely neglected maintenance.

6.4. Food safety controls

The inspection tasks in the food establishments visited were generally carried out in line with the relevant Community requirements. However, minor deficiencies were noted in several individual establishments.

Trichinae examinations of domestic pigs were not fully in line with EU requirements (Annex I of Council Directive 77/96/EEC)

In most cases when deficiencies were noted, the CAs provided evidence during the mission of corrective action taken or planned in order to remedy the situation.

6.5. Animal welfare at slaughter

Minor deficiencies as regards animal welfare at slaughter were noted in one slaughterhouse visited and the CA took immediate corrective action (Council Directive 93/119/EC).

6.6. Animal health controls

The overall animal health situation is favourable.

The delay in the submission to the Commission Service of the documentation demonstrating compliance with the appropriate conditions provided for in Council Directives 64/432/EEC and 91/68/EEC has postponed the qualification of herds as officially free of bovine TB and brucellosis and ovine/caprine brucellosis.

The TB testing was not fully in compliance with Council Directive 64/432/EEC, with regard to interpretation of reactions and standards of tuberculin.

The eradication programme for EBL did not fully comply with the national legislation with respect to slaughtering of reactors and with Council Directive 64/432/EEC with respect to follow-up tests.

The rabies vaccination campaign in wild animals has so far given promising results but only covers the western parts of the country.

6.7. Contingency Plans

The contents of the contingency plans were, in general, in compliance with the relevant Directives and Commission Guidelines, with the exception of Council Directive 2003/85/EC.

The CPs provide a clear chain of command and contains the necessary information. It was noted however that, the lack of specific information with regard to slaughtering, burial, rendering and vaccination may undermine the ability of dealing promptly and efficiently with an emergency situation.

The training and simulation exercises organised were adequate and the level of awareness of the CPs was reasonably good within the veterinary services, among the State authorised veterinarians, the operators and the public in general.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF LATVIA

(1) To inform all regions of the outcome of this mission in order to make them aware of, and if necessary correct similar deficiencies identified.

(2) To take further measures in order to ensure that official controls are carried out in a consistent and efficient way.

(3) To take further measures in order to ensure that the number of late notifications are reduced and that the database is promptly updated as foreseen in Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000.

(4) To ensure that trichinella examination is carried out in accordance with Annex I to Council Directive 77/96/EEC.

(5) To provide the Commission Services with documentation demonstrating compliance with the appropriate conditions provided for in Council Directives 64/432/EEC and 91/68/EEC in order to obtain recognition of freedom from certain diseases.

(6) To ensure that TB testing is carried out according to Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

(7) To ensure that compulsory slaughtering of EBL positive animals is carried out according to national legislation and that follow-up is carried out according to Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

(8) To consider implementing the oral rabies vaccination programme in wild animals in the remaining regions of the country.

(9) To amend the contingency plans in order to include the provisions of Council Directive 2003/85/EC and details on the quantity, type, and possible conditions for purchase of vaccines needed for the different possible scenarios as well as local information regarding:

- provision and resources for emergency killing of animals;
- possible disposal sites or other possible disposal ways.

ADDENDUM

Response of the Latvian Authorities to the draft mission report

The Latvian Authorities commented on the draft report by means of an e-mail dated 17 February 2006. These comments contained clarifications on factual errors in the draft report and have been incorporated into the final report.

ANNEX – LEGAL REFERENCES

COMMUNITY LEGISLATION CITED IN THIS REPORT

Legal acts cited in this annex refer, where applicable, to the last amended version.

European legislation	OJ	Title
Council Directive 64/432/EEC	L 121, 29.07.1964, p. 1977	Council Directive 64/432/EEC of 26 June 1964 on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine
Council Directive 64/433/EEC*	L 121, 29.07.1964, p. 2012	Council Directive 64/433/EEC of 26 June 1964 on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat
Council Directive 77/96/EEC*	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 67	Council Directive 77/96/EEC of 21 December 1976 on the examination for trichinae (Trichinella spiralis) upon importation from third countries of fresh meat derived from domestic swine
Council Directive 77/99/EEC*	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 85	Council Directive 77/99/EEC of 21 December 1976 on health problems affecting the production and marketing of meat products and certain other products of animal origin
Council Directive 77/391/EEC	L 145, 13.06.1977, p. 44	Council Directive 77/391/EEC of 17 May 1977 introducing Community measures for the eradication of brucellosis, tuberculosis and leucosis in cattle
Council Directive 91/68/EEC	L 046 , 19.02.1991, p. 19	Council Directive 91/68/EEC of 28 January 1991 on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in ovine and caprine animals
Council Directive 91/494/EEC*	L 268, 24.09.1991, p. 35	Council Directive 91/494/EEC on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in and imports from third countries of fresh poultry meat
Council Directive 91/495/EEC*	L 268, 24.09.1991, p. 41	Council Directive 91/495/EEC of 27 November 1990 concerning public health and animal health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of rabbit meat and farmed game meat
Council Directive 92/45/EEC*	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 35	Council Directive 92/45/EEC of 16 June 1992 on public health and animal health problems relating to the killing of wild game and the placing on the market of wild-game meat
Council Directive 92/46/EEC*	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/46/EEC of 16 June 1992 laying down the health rules for the production and placing on the market of raw milk, heat treated milk and milk-based products
Council Directive 92/40/EEC	L 167, 22.06.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/40/EEC of 19 May 1992 introducing Community measures for the control of avian influenza
Council Directive 92/66/EEC	L 260, 05.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/66/EEC of 14 July 1992 introducing Community measures for the control of Newcastle disease
Council Directive 93/119/EC	L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 21	Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing
Council Directive 94/65/EC*	L 368, 31.12.1994, p. 10	Council Directive 94/65/EC of 14 December 1994 laying down the requirements for the production and placing on the market of minced meat and meat preparations

European legislation	OJ	Title
Council Directive 2001/89/EC	L 316, 01.12.2001, p. 5	Council Directive 2001/89/EC of 23 October 2001 on Community measures for the control of classical swine fever
Council Directive 2003/85/EC	L 306, 22.11.2003, p. 1	Council Directive 2003/85/EC of 29 September 2003 on Community measures for the control of foot-and-mouth disease repealing Directive 85/511/EEC and Decisions 89/531/EEC and 91/665/EEC and amending Directive 92/46/EEC
Commission Regulation (EC) No. 494/98	L 060, 28.02.1998, p. 78	Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98 of 27 February 1998 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 as regards the application of minimum administrative sanctions in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals
Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council	L 204, 11.08.2000, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation EC No. 820/97
Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003	L 156, 25.06.2003, p. 9	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003 of 23 June 2003 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the minimum level of controls to be carried out in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals
Commission Decision 98/139/EC	L 038, 12.02.1998, p. 10	Commission Decision 98/139/EC of 4 February 1998 laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in the Member States
Commission Decision 2001/471/EC	L 165, 21.06.2001, p. 48	Commission Decision 2001/471/EC of 8 June 2001 laying down rules for the regular checks on the general hygiene carried out by the operators in establishments according to Directive 64/433/EEC on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat and Directive 71/118/EEC on health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat
Commission Decision 2004/402/EC	L 123, 27.04.2004, p. 111	Commission Decision 2004/402/EC of 26 April 2004 approving contingency plans for the control of avian influenza and Newcastle disease
Commission Decision 2004/431/EC	L 154, 30.04.2004, p. 40 as corrected in L 189, 27.05.2004, p. 31	Commission Decision 2004/431/EC of 29 April 2004 approving certain contingency plans for the control of classical swine fever
Commission Decision 2004/435/EC	L 154, 30.04.2004, p. 57 as corrected in L 189, 27.05.2004, p. 45	Commission Decision 2004/435/EC of 29 April 2004 approving certain contingency plans for the control of foot-and-mouth disease
Commission Decision 2004/571/EC	L 253 , 29.07.2004, p. 20	Commission Decision 2004/571/EC of 23 July 2004 on the purchase by the Community of classical swine fever vaccines and the establishment of Community stocks of those vaccines

*Repealed from 1 January 2006 and replaced by the new Community legal framework for products of animal origin.