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FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN
CROATIA
FROM 17 NOVEMBER TO 21 NOVEMBER 2008
IN ORDER TO
REVIEW CONTROLS CONCERNING ANIMAL WELFARE

Executive Summary

This report concerns certain findings from a mission carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in Croatia, from 17 to 21 November 2008.

These findings are in relation to the measures taken by the Croatian competent authorities, in response to a recommendation in report 8331/2006, to ensure that meat exported to the EU is obtained from animals which have been slaughtered under conditions which offer guarantees of humane treatment at least equivalent to those provided in Council Directive 93/119/EC.

The report concludes that the training and guidance from the CCA on animal welfare at slaughter has contributed to improved controls in slaughterhouses. As a result stunning of poultry in a slaughterhouse, approved for the export of meat to the EU, was more effective; however further actions are needed to ensure that this is the case for all categories of birds and that other welfare problems such as inappropriate shackling and pre-stun shocks are avoided.

The report makes one recommendation addressed to the Croatian competent authorities, aimed at rectifying the identified shortcomings and further enhancing the implementing and control measures in place.

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ABBREVIATIONS & SPECIAL TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority

1 INTRODUCTION

The mission took place in Croatia from 17 to 21 November 2008, as part of the monitoring of the actions taken by the competent authorities in Candidate Countries to transpose the acquis, in particular veterinary legislation, into its national legislation, and to ensure its effective implementation and enforcement.

The mission team comprised three inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), and was during mission by a representative from the Central Competent Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development (MAFRD) of Croatia, Veterinary Administration, (hereafter: CCA). An opening meeting was held on 17 November 2008 with the CCA.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

For the purpose of this report, the objective was to follow-up commitments given by the CCA in response to recommendations in DG(SANCO)/8331/2006 (hereafter: report 8331/2006) regarding welfare of poultry at slaughter at least equivalent to those conditions provided in Council Directive 93/119/EC.

3 LEGAL BASIS FOR THE MISSION

The mission was carried out under the provisions of Article 46 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004.

4 BACKGROUND

As part of a previous mission to Croatia on animal welfare in the framework of Accession preparations, a visit was made to an EU approved poultry slaughterhouse and certain recommendations were made in report.

Report 8331/2006 is available on the DG Health and Consumer website http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/index_en.htm.

Report 8331/2006 concluded that the lack of training and guidance from the CCA on animal welfare at slaughter contributed to inadequate controls in slaughterhouses. This resulted in inadequate stunning of poultry in a slaughterhouse which is approved for the export of meat to the EU, undermining the guarantees given by Croatia in respect of the protection of animals. Actions taken in response to the recommendation made in report 8331/2006 are indicated in the relevant part of the current report.

5 MAIN FINDINGS

5.1 ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OFFICIAL CONTROLS

5.1.1 *Training on animal welfare at the time of slaughter*

100 veterinarians attended a comprehensive theoretical and practical course in June 2008. The Authorised Veterinarian in the poultry slaughterhouse visited had attended this training.

5.1.2 *Documented procedures*

The CCA have now established parameters for electrical stunning of poultry, in line with the requirements of Directive 93/119/EC Annex C, Chapter II, 3.B.1. Recent guidance from the CCA also provides possible solutions to resolve the problem of pre-stun shocks.

5.1.3 *Inspections of animal welfare at the time of slaughter*

The inspection team noted that:

- Lairage procedures were well managed in this slaughterhouse; however handling of the larger turkeys was not fully satisfactory as the heads and wings of the larger birds came into contact with the platform where the workers carrying out the shackling were standing.
- Reports of CA inspections did not highlight a problem with pre-stun shocks, but during the visit the inspection team saw that this was still a problem for a large number of birds. According to the CA some unsuccessful attempts had been made to resolve this problem.
- The stunning of turkeys seen during the visit was effective and records of the food business operator's "own checks" indicated that the parameters laid down by the CA had been applied to the vast majority of birds. However these records indicated that at certain times of the year currents of around 80mA at 750Hz had been used on turkeys of c. 5kg. These parameters are lower than that prescribed by the CA for this category of bird.

6 CONCLUSIONS

1. The training provided by the CCA on animal welfare at slaughter has been generally comprehensive and has contributed to a higher level of knowledge among veterinarians working in the poultry slaughterhouse visited.
2. The documented procedures provided by the CCA, as required by Article 8 (1) of

Regulation (EC) No 882/2004, have been largely followed and this has contributed to resolving most of the issues related to insufficient stunning. Insufficient currents had been used on a small number of occasions for one category of turkey. Although the CCA guidance could also be useful in solving the problem with pre-stun shocks at the entrance to the water bath stunner, this had not been successfully implemented and handling was also not completely satisfactory.

7 CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 21 November 2008 with the CCA. At this meeting the main findings and conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The CCA provisionally accepted the findings and conclusions presented, and provided further clarification on the issues discussed.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

No.	Recommendation
1	The CCA should ensure that all necessary measures are taken to meet the requirements of Directive 93/119/EC in slaughterhouses exporting meat to the EU, in particular: to avoid unnecessary suffering when birds are conveyed to the water bath stunner, and to ensure that a sufficiently strong current is used for stunning each category of poultry.

The competent authority's response to the recommendations can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ap/ap_croatia_8324_2008.pdf

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF LEGISLATION REFERENCED IN THE REPORT

Reference	OJ Ref.	Detail
Regulation (EC) No 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
Directive 93/119/EC	OJ L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 21-34	Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing