Customs Working Group on Avian Influenza

Final Report

Keep infectious animal diseases out of the European Union!

Products of animal origin may carry pathogens that cause infectious diseases in animals

There are strict procedures and veterinary controls on the introduction of products of animal origin into the European Union

Travellers must surrender these products for official controls

*Note that these products may be subject to further examination. The authorities, on the basis of decisions, may refuse entry or imposition.*
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report summarises the outcome of the work of the Customs Working Group on Avian Influenza. The work of the group was organised by the Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union with support from the Directorate General Health and Consumer Protection. This group, financed under the Customs 2007 budget, met several times between November 2006 and March 2007 and based itself on the practical experience of Customs as well as of Veterinary authorities of the 24 Member States represented and Turkey (list of participants in Annex 1). The following conclusions and recommendations were agreed upon:

The Community can be best protected against threats to public and animal health on the basis of a **co-ordinated approach for controls**. Each Member State has to develop its own control strategy based on that approach.

Given the many other tasks of Customs authorities, an effective strategy **has to rely on risk management** to enable efficient selection of the most hazardous consignments to be controlled.

For that purpose a set of **risk indicators** has been developed to assist Member States in carrying out the risk assessment. These will be communicated via the Community Risk Management system using the secured electronic common risk management framework (RIF)¹.

**Close co-operation between Customs and Veterinary services** is relevant to ensure proper development and enforcement of the control strategy. Such co-operation includes the exchange of data to the necessary extent. Co-operation between the Customs authorities, information sharing on upcoming public or animal health risks or illegal importation of products of animal origin or live animals should be ensured through the RIF. This system will also be used to speedily alert the Customs administrations of the Member States to specific safeguard measures taken at Community level in this field.

**Effectiveness of controls** can be enhanced by the use of sniffer dogs and X-Ray scanners to screen big quantities of commercial consignments as well as luggage.

Adequate **training and guidance** for officials in charge of carrying out controls is necessary to ensure a high level of performance.

The Customs services of the Member States have to ensure that the necessary equipment to protect officials carrying out controls is available. Advice from health services should be sought in this area.

It is important that travellers are conscious of the public and animal health risks for the Community when they introduce non authorised products of animal origin. Member States should therefore exploit the means available to **draw the citizens' attention** to this problem.

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¹ See Regulation (EC) No 1875/2006 of 18 December 2006, *Article 4g*
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Introduction

Outbreaks of foot and mouth disease and classical swine fever in past years as well as the threats posed by highly pathogenic Avian Influenza since winter/spring 2005/2006 have highlighted that public and animal health risks related to the non authorized introduction of products of animal origin and live animals are to be taken seriously. It is necessary to be particularly vigilant in this area because the introduction of contaminated or infected products or animals, no matter how small, could lead to serious health implications. In addition, outbreaks of infectious animal diseases have a strong economic impact in an affected area that might go far beyond the direct losses faced by industry and farmers. In the case of zoonoses, it is also necessary to ensure the best possible protection due to the serious impact that an outbreak of such diseases would have on public health. Enhancement of the enforcement profile on these issues therefore needs to be sought for.

Image 1: Illegally imported products of animal origin seized at the airport of London Heathrow

Against this background, the European Commission (Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union) held an ad hoc meeting with Member States (21 present) on 28 March 2006 to agree on general recommendations to address the threats caused by the spring 2006 outbreak of Avian Influenza in several Member States of the European Union. There was a unanimous agreement on these recommendations and at the same time it was recognised that there was a need for a co-ordinated approach by the Community as a whole to best protect public and animal health in the European Union.

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2 Zoonoses are infectious diseases that may be transmitted from animals, both wild and domestic, to humans or from humans to animals
The outcome of this ad hoc meeting, together with the useful experience gained by Member States control authorities during the outbreak of Avian Influenza in spring 2006, was taken as a starting point for the work of the "Customs Working Group on Avian Influenza" that was constituted under the Customs 2007 programme on 29 November 2006.

For logistical reasons, the full group was divided into 3 subgroups that focussed on the following issues:

- Customs controls (subgroup 1)
- Co-operation between Customs and Veterinary authorities/awareness raising (subgroup 2)
- Risk management and the exchange of information at national and Community level (subgroup 3)

A list of the participants in the subgroups is included in Annex 1.

More detailed information on the background, the working methods and the objectives of the project are set out in Annex 2.

Complete documentation, including useful background information, replies on questionnaires on which the subgroups based their work and consolidated versions of the most important legal texts was provided to all participants on a CD-rom.

The present report summarises the outcome resulting from the work of the group.

In the longer term, these results should be seen as a tool to improve Customs controls and the selection of consignments suspected of infringing veterinary and safety rules. It should furthermore help Member States to establish and harmonise guidelines enhancing Customs controls and the cooperation with the health authorities to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of diseases.

**CHAPTER 1**

**CONTROLS**

1.1. Control Strategy

One of the roles of Customs authorities is to manage risks which have been identified by other agencies in relation to third country imports. These risks vary between those that pose a continuous threat and those that emerge once only. Examples of the former include risks to the Community and national priorities and objectives such as for example, the priority of ensuring that goods entering and leaving the Customs territory of the EU are correctly notified to the Customs authorities in a timely fashion. Examples of the latter include specific emerging threats related to the safety and security of society in the area of product safety, public and animal health and protection of the environment. Customs manage these risks through a variety of control strategies that are largely based on the development of indicators that can identify the presence of real or potential threats and/or irregularities.
For example in the area of public and animal health the indicators will largely be based on intelligence and other available information (including, for example, health import policies). A variety of methods are employed by Customs authorities. In the second category these risks are managed by Customs authorities on an agency basis. Strategies range from creating risk profiles, which involve the use of risk indicators to detect movement of potentially hazardous goods, to other more visible actions such as the deployment of Customs staff to check the compliance of passengers and their baggage entering and leaving the Community.

The control strategy should also be reviewed on a regular basis, in co-operation with Veterinary authorities, to ensure it continues to address the risks posed by various animal diseases, as well as threats to public health and to ensure that the controls in place to combat these risks remain appropriate. Risk analysis has to be carried out as a permanent exercise in order to reach this objective.

Experience gained during the outbreaks of Avian Influenza in winter 2005/2006 has shown that travellers generally understand the need for increased levels of controls on traffic arriving from high-risk areas. An appropriate publicity campaign to make citizens aware of the rules in force and the reason behind these rules could certainly further improve this situation and contribute to an efficient use of resources for controls. Such a campaign also improves the awareness of citizens, and thus lowers the amount of prohibited goods carried as luggage.

In many Member States, the enforcement of Regulation (EC) No. 745/2004 is directly attributed to Customs authorities by national legislation. Therefore, Member States' Custom Services have built up a great deal of expertise in this area in recent years. For commercial consignments, the main responsibility is attributed to Veterinary border inspection posts. Customs authorities are also involved in the control system by ensuring that only consignments for which a Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVED) is presented can be assigned a Customs-approved treatment or use following the authorisation set out in this CVED. Moreover, due to their task of controlling the overall flow of goods across the external border, Customs services are best placed to detect illegal consignments. In some Member States, this issue was considered when drafting the national legislation attributing the responsibility for detecting illegal consignments to Customs authorities.

Controls should be carried out in close co-operation between the Customs and Veterinary authorities of each Member State. This is of particular importance for controls of commercial consignments where Community legislation laying down import conditions for products of animal origin attributes the main responsibility to the Veterinary border inspection posts. In these cases, the Customs control role focuses on ensuring that commercial consignments have been presented to the competent border inspection post and have undergone the veterinary checks required by this Community legislation, prior to Customs clearance of the goods.

In that context it is important that each Member State develops a control strategy that takes account of the relevance of tasks of both the Veterinary and Customs services in the framework of protection of the public and animal health, other tasks to be completed and the control resources available. The result should be a balanced strategy that addresses the health risks identified and enables EU Customs Administrations to target Customs controls on commercial and personal importations of products from high risk areas.
1.2. Competencies of Customs authorities

The legal framework described in chapter 4 clearly states that custom services must contribute to the enforcement of legislation in veterinary matters.

To carry out this task and depending on the circumstances, as well as on the specific provisions in the national legislation, Customs authorities have a range powers at their disposal. These include powers relating to inspections, controls, detentions/seizures and where applicable, prosecutions.

These powers vary between Member States. In a number of Member States, the power to seize products of animal origin is limited to goods imported by travellers. In most Member States, the goods have to be handed over to the Veterinary services that take the final decision. In other Member States, the Customs authorities take a final decision upon the disposal of seized goods.

1.3. Tools and approaches for controls relating to products of animal origin

1.3.1 Commercial consignments

- Risk analysis on the basis of pre-arrival information
- Documentary checks on Customs declarations lodged as well as on the supporting commercial or other official documents presented for Customs clearance purposes
- Physical inspection of means of transport
- Scanning of means of transport and containers
- Physical checks of consignments during the clearing procedure after lodging a Customs declaration

The focus of these control measures is at the external Community frontier. Additionally, the Customs administrations of some Member States have further national powers to carry out inland controls as for example road controls.

1.3.2 Personal luggage

- Risk analysis on the basis of information available prior to the arrival of passengers (flight schedules, airports of departure; passenger lists if indicated)
- Scanning of luggage
- Channelling of the goods to be controlled by using separated conveyor belts for luggage from high risk areas (depending on the local situation)
- Inspection of luggage by using sniffer dogs
- Asking questions to travellers
- Physical checks of luggage of selected travellers
- Availability of awareness raising material
1.4. Control Equipment and its deployment

1.4.1 Commercial consignments

- **X-Ray scanners**

There is a range of different scanners available for the different control purposes. In large seaports there may be fixed or mobile container scanners. For road crossings at the land frontier there are mobile scanners.

Scanners can be programmed to detect organic products.

At seaports and road border crossings with big quantities of traffic fixed scanners for trailers and containers should be available. These could be used for controls in respect of products of animal origin as well as for other control purposes.

For smaller seaports and road border crossings the use of mobile scanning units should be considered.

At airports the best place to deploy scanning units are the designated examination areas.

Mobile scanning units could also be used for regular targeted checks at the premises of mail services and express carriers.

*Image 2: Mobile Container Scanner operating at Riga port*
1.4.2 Personal luggage

- **X-Ray scanners**

As for commercial consignments, there is a range of different scanners available for the different control purposes. For big airports fixed scanners should be available due to the quantity of luggage that has to be checked. Mobile scanning units allow for a flexible control strategy depending on the local situation. They are also suitable for controls at smaller airports or seaports with only occasional passenger traffic from high risk areas.

Scanners can be programmed to detect organic products.

Fixed scanners for luggage can be deployed in terminals with a high volume of traffic from high risk areas (countries with disease outbreaks).

Depending on the local situation and other instructions to be followed, scanning units can be deployed at any place where the luggage is handled from luggage sorting rooms until the exit from the controlled area through the red or green channel.

*Image 3: Preparing for passenger controls of an incoming flight from a high risk area at the airport of Vienna Schwechat*
Sniffer dogs

Sniffer dogs need specific training to detect products of animal origin if they are to achieve good control results.

Sniffer dogs that are trained for passive indication can be used as well as those that work actively. However, in public areas preference should be given to passive dogs.

Similar to X-ray scanners, sniffer dogs can be used at any stage of the luggage handling.

Controls in public areas provide for an enhanced visibility and might therefore have a preventive effect.

Best practices as regards animal welfare should be observed for the keeping of sniffer dogs.

Image 4: Sniffer dog at work at Schiphol airport (Amsterdam)

1.5. Instructions and Training

To obtain the best results, it is vital that Customs officials are trained to understand the reasoning behind the controls and how they should be implemented in practice.

Written guidelines about the application of regulatory and anti-smuggling controls for products of animal origin are as necessary as training courses covering this subject. Both written guidelines and training for Customs officials should emphasize the need for cooperation between Customs and Veterinary services and also cover the formalities to be observed by Customs authorities seizing goods. Customs officials should be informed about whom to contact in case of difficulties.
1.5.1 Written Guidelines

National guidelines agreed between the Veterinary and Customs authorities and drafted on the basis of this document should cover all aspects of Customs contribution to the protection of public and animal health. However, specific aspects relating to the situation in the respective Member State should be added where necessary.

Close co-operation with the national Veterinary service when drafting guidelines is suggested.

To improve co-operation between Customs and Veterinary authorities, the official veterinarians concerned should be aware of the principle working methods of Customs. Therefore guidelines for Customs authorities should also be made available to them.

At the same time Customs authorities should be informed about the working methods of the Veterinary authorities and should therefore have access to the set of instructions relevant to their work. This is particularly important in Member States where Customs authorities have extensive powers for the enforcement of Veterinary legislation as far as illegal consignments are concerned.

1.5.2 Training

Training could include courses at Customs schools or training centres for the Veterinary services. It could also be organized as training on the job. The training should be given by Customs officials with the necessary experience in the field or by trainers specifically prepared for this task.

Support given by the Veterinary services would be useful.

As already indicated above, Customs officials should be well informed of the relevant Community and national legislation in the veterinary area relevant to their work, and therefore the relevant legislative texts should constitute a main component of the training courses. The same principle applies to Customs legislation that should be covered by training activities for veterinarians in border inspection posts.

The training should include the following issues (normal training needs are not considered here):

- Legislative framework for controls on commercial and personal imports of products of animal origin and live animals
- Responsibilities of Customs authorities for enforcing the legislative framework
- Customs responsibilities with view to conditions set out by Veterinary authorities in Common Veterinary Entry Documents and in Council Directive 97/78/EC
- Awareness raising on the need to rapidly share information on risks which could arise in other Member States
- Best practices on sampling methods (as far as necessary)
Methods to pack and seal products of animal origin after detention or seizure and their disposal in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1774/2002

Methods for self-protection/Use of the protective equipment available

Use of a scanner (limited to staff that operates scanners)

1.6. Health and Safety

1.6.1 Protective Equipment

It is important that officials carrying out controls are adequately protected against the risk of infection. The contamination risk should continuously be assessed in close co-operation with the Veterinary services, as well as with the physician in charge of safety and health at work. These services should also provide advice on the deployment of protective equipment available and on rules of behaviour to minimize the infection risk.

Member States’ Customs services use a range of items for the protection of their officials. These include:

- Overclothes/aprons
- Latex gloves
- Masks
- Goggles
- Overshoes
- Plastic boots
- Disinfection liquids
- Adequate material to pack and seal products of animal origin after seizure

1.6.2 Storage and transfer of detained or seized goods

Products of animal origin detained or seized should be considered to be potentially harmful and therefore appropriate precautions should be taken when handling the goods. They should be kept in a secure container and ideally frozen until their final disposal in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1774/2002. In addition, these goods should be kept strictly separate from staff refrigerators used by customs officials to store their own food intended for personal consumption.

When detained or seized goods are transferred to the place of their final disposal they should be packaged in sealed bags or containers, or in any other way that ensures the prevention of contamination/infection and the withdrawal of the seizure.

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CHAPTER 2

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN CUSTOMS, VETERINARY AND OTHER SERVICES

2.1. General Principles of co-operation

2.1.1 Between Customs and Veterinary authorities

Good co-operation between Customs and Veterinary services is crucial in order to achieve the best control results. Community legislation as outlined in chapter 4 therefore establishes a formalised co-operation between the two services. Co-operation is a legal obligation throughout the Community and Member States should clearly define the roles that Customs officers play in veterinary matters and vice versa the roles Veterinary officers play in Customs matters.

It is of the utmost importance that all services at EU level as well as at national level encourage the use of a common terminology which is understandable and is applicable and enforceable by both Customs and Veterinary administrations. This should be taken into account when any new legal provisions are drafted.

2.1.2 Between Customs and other authorities

In the fight against the introduction of animal diseases such as Avian Influenza, co-operation from all authorities even if only remotely involved, is also an essential prerequisite. This includes not just co-operation from Veterinary/health authorities, but also from police and others. The latter category includes airlines, ferry and cruise operators, air and sea cargo carriers, railway companies or authorities, postal companies or services, brokerage related agencies and so on.

Whilst carrying out controls on passengers, Customs services should also be able to count on the full co-operation from the other authorities at the places of arrival. This includes port, airport and immigration services. This co-operation should include the provision of information for use by Customs officials and the provision of search and detention facilities and the like.
**Recommendation**

To enhance the effectiveness of Customs responses, agreed strategies should be negotiated with the abovementioned agencies and authorities. These can include memoranda of understanding setting out respective roles and responsibilities.

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### 2.2. Methods of co-operation

#### 2.2.1 Ad hoc Meetings

Ad hoc meetings to solve current problems and identify emerging risk trends should be held in the Member States both at central and at local level whenever necessary.

#### 2.2.2 Common inspections

Customs officers and border veterinarians should, where appropriate, also conduct coordinated or joint inspections. This includes also coordinated actions especially in the exchange of information to improve risk targeting. All these activities require knowledge of counterparts at different level in the services concerned.

#### 2.2.3 Use of infrastructure

Where necessary and agreed, for Customs control purposes, Customs officers should be allowed by the border veterinarians to use the infrastructure of the Veterinary border inspections posts for consignments of live animals and products of animal origin. Due to sanitary risks involved, the use of the infrastructure of these border inspection posts should only occur under Veterinary supervision. It is recommended that this could be in the framework of a written agreement or memorandum of understanding between the services to ensure proper veterinary control and non interference with the conduct of veterinary checks.

#### 2.2.4 Specific Support

Whenever necessary, Customs officers should contact the responsible Veterinary authorities for assistance or clarification by the means appropriate for the case in question. The same applies to border Veterinary services, who should contact Customs officers whenever questions on Customs matters need to be clarified.

### 2.3. Exchange of information between Customs and Veterinary authorities

General information has to be distributed widely between the two services as a basic principle. The more concrete the information, the more its distribution should be restricted (e.g. information which is relevant to airports should be sent to airports only and information which is relevant to a specific border post should be sent to that border post only). To avoid an overload of information for users of both services, information should not be duplicated by this distribution.
As IT tools such as RIF (Risk information Form) foreseen in Regulation (EC) No. 2454/93\(^4\), RASFF (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed) established by Regulation (EC) No 178/2002\(^5\), TRACES (Trade Control and Export System) introduced by Decision 2004/292/EC\(^6\); AFIS (Anti Fraud Information System) on the basis of Regulation (EC) No 515/97\(^7\) are already in place for the exchange of similar information, a new system should not be created. The existing systems should be seen as complementary to each other and interlinked in so far as possible and where appropriate. Also existing national IT systems which support the relevant data exchange can be used.

If trends on illegal activities or illegal introductions of animals or of products of animal origin are detected by one service, it should inform immediately the other service to enable further enforcement action to be taken. Information should be exchanged to assist the targeting of illegal imports of animals or of products of animal origin.

When the information concerns more than one Member State, the Customs administration concerned should use the RIF-network to share the information with the Customs services in concerned Member States.

### 2.4. Access to data

#### 2.4.1 Data on the "legal framework"

European legislation relating to the import of animals or products of animal origin is often very technical. Tools to facilitate the work such as compilations of existing Community legislation should in general be widely available to all services involved in the implementation of existing legislation. For Customs data this has already been achieved by the integrated tariff of the European Communities (TARIC) which is available to the general public and thus also to Veterinary authorities on the internet.

In the veterinary field, the integrated computerised veterinary system, TRACES, provides assistance and certification for all Veterinary authorities within an informatics network to improve the sanitary protection of EU. This system is at present however not interlinked with the databases of Customs authorities. However, EU Customs Administrations require certainty about prohibited products as Customs enforcement action requires a clear legal basis for detaining or seizing products which breach import prohibitions. If necessary, Customs Administrations may also have to provide evidence of this base to a court. Therefore, it is very important that legislative descriptions of prohibited products are as precise as possible for both identification and evidential purposes.


\(^7\) Council Regulation (EC) No 515/97 of 13 March 1997 on mutual assistance between the administrative authorities of the Member States and co-operation between the latter and the Commission to ensure the correct application of the law on customs and agricultural matters (OJ L 82, 22.3.1997, p. 1–16)
2.4.2 Access to control data

Articles 6 and 7 of Regulation (EC) No 136/2004 and Articles 5 and 6 of Regulation (EC) No 282/2004 establish that Veterinary services should have access to those databases or relevant parts thereof which are available to the Customs services and to those of commercial operators.

In this context the question arose, if this access has to be an online access at all events. As laid down by subparagraph 2 of Article 7 of Regulation (EC) No 136/2004 and in Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 282/2004 an online access is, “subject to appropriate data security”, necessary “in so far as it is possible and where appropriate”.

Readily available access to control based data would enable the Veterinary authorities to cross check their information on consignments introduced into the Community that are subject to veterinary controls with the information available to Customs authorities. Veterinary controls have to take place directly after the unloading of consignments of products of animal origin and live animals and before Customs clearance. Accordingly, pre-arrival information (e.g., cargo manifests) would provide the Veterinary authorities with an adequate tool to increase compliance controls on Veterinary pre-arrival requirements in known problem areas such as goods placed in temporary storage, free zones and free warehouses.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that access to the data required by the Veterinary authorities to enable them to carry out their duties should be organised at national level and further discussed and harmonised at Community level. This might include for example, initiatives such as the Single Window concept.

2.5. Information of Customs administrations on Community Measures with impact on Customs

Where Customs authorities are involved in control and enforcement action relating to the protection of public or animal health, timely informing Customs authorities about new measures being discussed in the area of public and animal health is crucial to ensure that controls and enforcement measures can be implemented properly and effectively. It should therefore be ensured that adequate information is made available to the Customs administrations of the Member States in due time.
Recommendation

Community measures aimed at the protection of public and animal health that have an impact on Customs authorities should be put on the agenda of already established working groups (i.e. Customs 2007 Working Methods Group). Member States’ delegates to these groups should coordinate between the relevant Veterinary, food and Customs authorities of their Member State prior to meetings where these issues are discussed and inform them about these proposals to the necessary extent.

2.6. Information for travellers

Paragraph 1 of Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 745/2004 lays down Member States' obligations regarding information for travellers.

A number of Member States have attributed the responsibility of informing travellers to their health authorities. Customs Authorities are directly affected by the quality of this information. It is in their interest that the general public understand their responsibilities, as Custom officials have to ensure that the rules are adhered to. The Regulation states that at all designated points of entry into the Community the rules for imports of products of animal origin should be brought to the attention of travellers arriving from third countries. This information should include at least the poster provided for in Annex II of Regulation (EC) No 745/2004, displayed by prominent notices placed in easily visible locations.

Image 6: Customs officer informs passenger about the rules in force

To raise traveller awareness of the importance of the veterinary, public and animal health rules and their strict enforcement by control authorities, additional information could be disseminated, for example, by the following means:

- Leaflets distributed on exit and/or on entry
- Webpages on the websites of Veterinary services and Customs administrations
- Short films or cartoons to be shown at airports/ferry ports/ports/railway stations or during the trip
KEEP INFECTIOUS ANIMAL DISEASES OUT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION!

PRODUCTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN MAY CARRY PATHOGENS CAUSING INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN ANIMALS

Due to the risk of travellers importing disease into the European Union, all personal consignments of meat, meat products, milk and milk products are prohibited to enter the EU with the exception of the following:

- powdered infant milk, infant food and special foods required for medical reasons provided that:
  - the product does not require refrigeration before consumption;
  - it is a packaged proprietary brand product; and
  - the packaging is unbroken.

- personal consignments of meat, meat products, milk or milk products from the Faeroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland with a combined total weight that does not exceed 5 kg.

- personal consignments of meat, meat products, milk or milk products from Andorra, Norway and San Marino

You may only bring in other consignments of meat, meat products, milk or milk products into the Community if:

- you have obtained the necessary documentation from the official veterinary services of the country from which you are travelling stating that the goods conform to the requirements for entry into the EU; and
- you declare any such goods and present your documentation on your arrival to an authorised EU border inspection post for veterinary control.

- All meat, meat products, milk or milk products not conforming to these rules must be surrendered on arrival to the frontier of the European Union for official disposal.

FAILURE TO DECLARE SUCH ITEMS MAY RESULT IN A FINE OR CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.

For food of animal origin other than meat, meat products, milk and milk products, you may bring up to 1 kg, if authorised, without submitting it for veterinary control.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding

*Image 7: Information leaflet as included in Annex III of Regulation (EC) No. 745/2004*
Chapter 3

RISK MANAGEMENT

3.1. Common principles of applied risk management

In general, best Customs risk management practice is based on common principles that apply throughout the Community. These principles are aimed at implementing harmonised standards across the EU for identification, analysis and treatment of risks for the targeted treatment of persons (including their accompanying baggage) and cargo entering the Community.

Risk management needs to conform to Community legislation and requirements including the more recent developments in the areas of health as well as the risk management provisions recently introduced in Community Customs legislation by Regulation (EC) No 1875/2006.\(^8\)

The basic components for risk management are the data itself and the resources to analyse it and deal with the outputs. Efficient risk management dictates that where feasible, existing risk indicators should be used. Usually it is a combination of more than one risk indicator that triggers a control. Co-operation within Customs services and with other agencies is essential in sourcing the information, carrying out controls and dealing with the consequences.

At Community level, recent developments present significant opportunities for co-operation between Member States. Systems such as the Risk Information Form (RIF) and the Anti Fraud Information System (AFIS) have been developed to enhance best practice in this area. At global level, the WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (SAFE) sets out a blueprint for co-operation between Customs authorities around the world. These systems and standards are most effective when Customs officers at all levels are aware of them, have been provided with appropriate training on their meaning and use and are fully supported at management and resource level.

Mechanisms for regular feedback and review should be put in place to ensure regular contacts not just with the Veterinary and other agencies, especially at times of increased threat, but also with the other agencies and players mentioned above. This is especially important in those areas where the distinction in the responsibilities of both Customs services and those agencies is less clear.

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9 Article 4f states:

1. Customs authorities shall undertake risk management to differentiate between the levels of risk associated with goods subject to customs control or supervision and to determine whether or not, and if so where, the goods will be subject to specific customs controls.

2. The determination of levels of risk shall be based on an assessment of the likelihood of the risk-related event occurring and its impact, should the event actually materialise.

The basis for the selection of consignments or declarations to be subject to customs controls shall include a random element.
Additionally, recent and emerging developments in electronic systems for risk analysis present opportunities for targeting controls more effectively and efficiently than ever before.

**Recommendation**

Customs authorities should ensure Customs officials engaged in the management of risks and the carrying out of controls are fully aware of recent developments in risk analysis at EU and national MS level. They should have available to them the training and resources to exploit the opportunities to maximise their effectiveness.

### 3.2. Specific issues concerning the risk of introduction of public health threats and animal diseases

In the specific context of the prevention of the introduction of public health threats and animal diseases such as for example Avian Influenza, risk management needs to exploit existing information as much as possible from a wide range of sources and especially from Veterinary and health authorities.

Controls may be both, specific and random, visible and discreet, and employ both passive and active methods. Whichever type of control is used it means in practice that risk profiles should be developed using all available risk indicators.

**Recommendation**

The prevention of the introduction of animal diseases as well as countering threats to public health is recognised as an area that requires special attention. Therefore, specific commonly agreed risk indicators in this field should be developed at national, Community and international levels.

The commonly agreed risk indicators should be accompanied by appropriate actions to address the identified risks in a harmonised way and their application should take into account the proportionality of the risk, the urgency of the necessary controls and the probable impact on the trade flow and control resources.

Electronic and manual risk analysis systems should be tested periodically to ensure that they are capable of responding quickly to threats posed by possible movements of infected goods and passengers. This includes the evaluation of the commonly agreed risk indicators.

### 3.3. Risk management for passengers and their luggage

Passengers enter and leave the Community by a variety of means (i.e. air, sea, road, rail and on foot). In all cases, Customs authorities are faced with challenges such as a lack of time to prepare control strategies targeted at individuals. Advance information that could be used to perform planned risk analysis is often not available. In such instances, Customs authorities rely on the co-operation of the carriers and private sector operators for information and alerts.
The dangers of inconsistencies and varying levels of controls by Customs services at all control points within Member States and across the Community needs to be recognised. This can result in high risk passengers and luggage being diverted towards those Community entry points where there is a perception that there are fewer or less sophisticated controls.

The development of best practice in risk management in each mode of transport requires different and proportionate responses based on the specific characteristics of each mode of transport.

Specific risk management techniques are necessary to control baggage being interlined\(^{10}\) or in transit to smaller Community airports via larger airports. Best practice in risk management means awareness and training in countering these threats.

**Recommendation**

Where necessary control strategies should include allocating additional control resources to lesser used entry points e.g., smaller airports, ferry ports, etc, especially at times of enhanced threat.

### 3.4. Risk management for cargo

Cargo has its own characteristics and the threat should not be underestimated. For example, quantities of cargo, especially containerised cargo, are far greater than unaccompanied passenger baggage. The risk of a widespread and catastrophic outbreak of disease from just one contaminated consignment is therefore much greater. However, control efforts and systems are more sizeable in this area compared with those relating to passengers' baggage.

**Recommendation**

In relation to cargo, electronic risk analysis tools and techniques should be available not only to customs authorities but also to other concerned agencies, including those engaged in veterinary and health issues. These harmonised risk management strategies should take account of all available risk indicators developed at national, EU and international levels.

### 3.5. Risk management for postal consignments and express carrier traffic

Postal consignments and packages transported by express carriers or normal post carry with them their own risks. There is often a lack of information and advance warning to enable Customs services to plan control strategies for specific consignments, a similar problem to that for passenger traffic. Accordingly, the development of best practice in this area, presents unique and difficult challenges. International agreements and

\(^{10}\) Interlining is a commercial agreement between individual airlines to handle passengers travelling on itineraries that require multiple airlines
conventions in relation to postal consignments affect and limit the information that can be supplied to Customs services.

**Recommendation**

Customs authorities must ensure that they receive as soon as possible and in advance all the available information from the express carriers and postal authorities. This can be achieved for example, through full access by Customs authorities to the manifests and other advance information held by the express carriers.

Customs authorities should also ensure that their staff has full access to postal depots, storage depots, etc. especially to those areas where parcels and the like are sorted prior to delivery.

### 3.6. Risk management in case of emergencies and times of increased threat

Customs authorities have to operate on the basis of selectivity in carrying out controls and similar actions. Even in the case of a widespread outbreak of Avian Influenza or any other infectious disease it would not be possible to undertake 100% controls on all passenger and cargo entering the Community. Therefore it is necessary to take advantage of all the available information and continuously work to adjust and enhance control methods. This can be achieved by using the lessons learnt following previous public health threats such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), foot and mouth disease and Avian Influenza. These experiences could be extremely useful, for example when planning a response to future threats.

**Recommendation**

A systematic review of previous responses at all levels to threats to human and animal health can provide useful guidance for the development of future harmonised risk management strategies.

Statistical reports on past actions carried out by the competent authorities that can provide useful feedback, need to be analysed at national and Community level in order to influence future strategies.

At times of increased threat, it is recommended that because of the difficulties of controls on passengers and accompanying baggage, additional staff of proven ability, training and back-up should be deployed to this area.

### 3.7. Most significant risk indicators

Data regarding the list of most significant risk indicators for the controls of passengers (including their accompanying baggage) and cargo (including express and postal consignments) are confidential and will only be made available through the RIF system to allow national Customs administrations to integrate this information into their national risk management systems.
CHAPTER 4

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. General Remarks

Community legislation lays down a detailed set of rules to reduce the risk of public health threats and animal diseases being introduced into the Community through imports of live animals or products of animal origin. As regards Customs controls that are carried out to support the implementation of this policy, the general principles laid down in Community's Customs legislation apply.

Community legislation also foresees rules for co-operation between Veterinary and Customs services as well as provisions on targeting controls by managing the risks involved.

More specifically, the following legislation has to be observed for carrying out Customs controls on products of animal origin.

4.2. Community Customs Code

Consolidated version as of 11 May 2005:

Article 13 of the Community Customs Code provides a legal basis to carry out Customs controls. In general the legislation states these controls shall be based on risk analysis (Article 13 paragraph 2).

Where controls are carried out by authorities other than Customs authorities, these controls shall be carried out in close co-operation with those authorities (Article 13 paragraph 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article 13</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Customs authorities may, in accordance with the conditions laid down by the provisions in force, carry out all the controls they deem necessary to ensure that customs rules and other legislation governing the entry, exit, transit, transfer and end-use of goods moved between the customs territory of the Community and third countries and the presence of goods that do not have Community status are correctly applied. Customs controls for the purpose of the correct application of Community legislation may be carried out in a third country where an international agreement provides for this.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Customs controls, other than spot-checks, shall be based on risk analysis using automated data processing techniques, with the purpose of identifying and quantifying the risks and developing the necessary measures to assess the risks, on the basis of criteria developed at national, Community and, where available, international level. The committee procedure shall be used for determining a common risk management framework, and for establishing common criteria and priority control areas.</td>
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</table>

Member States, in co-operation with the Commission, shall establish a computer system for the implementation of risk management.

3. Where controls are performed by authorities other than the customs authorities, such controls shall be performed in close coordination with the customs authorities, wherever possible at the same time and place.

4. In the context of the controls provided for in this Article, customs and other competent authorities, such as Veterinary and police authorities, may communicate data received, in connection with the entry, exit, transit, transfer and end-use of goods moved between the customs territory of the Community and third countries and the presence of goods that do not have Community status, between each other and to the customs authorities of the Member States and to the Commission where this is required for the purposes of minimising risk.

Communication of confidential data to the customs authorities and other bodies (e.g. security agencies) of third countries shall be allowed only in the framework of an international agreement and provided that the data protection provisions in force, in particular Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data and Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data are respected.

Goods may only be assigned a Customs approved treatment or use subject to rules on prohibitions and restrictions on grounds of the protection of health and life of humans, animals and plants as well as for other reasons (Article 58 paragraph 2).

**Article 58**

1. Save as otherwise provided, goods may at any time, under the conditions laid down, be assigned any customs-approved treatment or use irrespective of their nature or quantity, or their country of origin, consignment or destination.

2. Paragraph 1 shall not preclude the imposition of prohibitions or restrictions justified on grounds of public morality, public policy or public security, the protection of health and life of humans, animals or plants, the protection of national treasures possessing artistic, historic or archaeological value or the protection of industrial and commercial property.

### 4.3. Implementing Provisions to the Community Customs Code

Consolidated version as of 1 July 2006:


*Important notice*

This version does not include the amendments introduced by Regulation (EC) No 1875/2006 of 18 December 2006

This text can be found under:


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This text establishes a requirement for lodging of an entry summary declaration prior to the arrival of the goods in the Customs territory of the Community. This requirement, which will enter into force on the 1st July 2009, will be an important tool to supervise the entry and the handling of goods in free zones and free warehouses.

Apart from that, Part I, Title I, chapter 5 of this text establishes the tools for the setting up of a common risk management framework and standards for the establishment of an equivalent level of Customs controls throughout the Community.

<table>
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<th>Risk management</th>
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<td>Article 4g</td>
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</table>

1. Risk management at Community level, referred to in Article 13(2) of the Code, shall be carried out in accordance with an electronic common risk management framework, comprised of the following elements:

   (a) a Community customs risk management system for the implementation of risk management, to be used for the communication among the Member States customs authorities and the Commission of any risk-related information that would help to enhance customs controls;

   (b) common priority control areas;

   (c) common risk criteria and standards for the harmonised application of customs controls in specific cases.

2. Customs authorities shall, using the system referred to in point (a) of paragraph 1, exchange risk related information in the following circumstances.

   (a) the risks are assessed by a customs authority as significant and requiring customs control and the results of the control establish that the event, as referred to in Article 4(25) of the Code, has occurred;

   (b) the control results do not establish that the event, as referred to in Article 4(25) of the Code, has occurred, but the customs authority concerned considers the threat to present a high risk elsewhere in the Community.

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<th>Article 4j</th>
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For the establishment of common priority control areas and the application of common risk criteria and standards account shall be taken of the following elements:

   (a) proportionality to the risk;

   (b) the urgency of the necessary application of the controls;

   (c) probable impact on trade flow, on individual Member States and on control resources.


Consolidated version as of 1 January 2007:


This Regulation lays down rules for the handling of and trade in animal by-products to prevent these products from presenting a risk to public or animal health.

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4.5. Regulation (EC) No 998/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council\textsuperscript{15}


This Regulation foresees certain allowances for the importation of pet animals accompanying their owners. In particular it provides for a legal basis for "animal passports" and the electronic identification of the animals concerned.


This Regulation foresees a specific "Common Veterinary Entry Document" to be issued for products of animal origin that have been introduced into the European Community. The presentation of a Common Veterinary Entry Document duly endorsed by the official veterinarian is conditional for these goods to be accepted for any Customs procedure or their admission for entry into a free zone or free warehouse. This Regulation provides for the possibility of bringing into the Community up to one kilogram of products of animal origin other than dairy products and meat and meat products.

4.7. Regulation (EC) No 282/2004 of the Council and the European Parliament\textsuperscript{17}


As Regulation (EC) No. 136/2004 does for products of animal origin, this Regulation foresees a "Common Veterinary Entry Document" to be issued for live animals that have been introduced into the European Community. The duly endorsed document has to be presented where the animals are going to be released for any Customs procedure or admitted for entry into a free zone or free warehouse.


This Regulation foresees that apart for few exemptions, the same rules that apply to commercial consignments, should also apply to meat and meat products as well as dairy products contained in travellers' luggage. Goods which do not fulfil these requirements should be seized and disposed of in accordance with national legislation.


\textsuperscript{17} Commission Regulation (EC) No 282/2004 of 18 February 2004 introducing a document for the declaration of, and veterinary checks on, animals from third countries entering the Community (OJ L 49, 19.2.2004, p. 11–24)


Consolidated version as of 25 May 2006:

This Regulation lays down the principal rules for official controls to be carried out in order to ensure compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules. Chapter V of this Regulation (Articles 14 to 25) particularly deals with controls on food and feed introduced from third countries.

According to Article 24 of this Regulation close co-operation between Veterinary and Customs services must be ensured.

| Article 24 |
| Competent authorities and customs services |
| 1. For the organisation of the official controls referred to in this Chapter, the competent authorities and the customs services shall cooperate closely. |
| 2. With regard to consignments of feed and food of animal origin and of feed and food referred to in Article 15(5), customs services shall not allow their entry or handling in free zones or free warehouses without the agreement of the competent authority. |
| 3. Where samples are taken, the competent authority shall inform the customs services and the operators concerned and indicate whether or not the goods can be released before the results of the analysis of the samples are available, provided the traceability of the consignment is ensured. |
| 4. In the case of release for free circulation, competent authorities and customs services shall work together in accordance with the requirements laid down in Articles 2 to 6 of Regulation (EEC) No 339/93. |

4.10. Decision 2007/275/EC


This Decision establishes a list of animals and products that have to be presented to a border inspection post for examination and for which a duly endorsed Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVED) has to be presented to the Customs authorities.

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### ANNEX I

### SUBGROUPS

#### Subgroup 1

**Rapporteur: Sharon MOLE, United Kingdom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>Christos</td>
<td>CHRISTOU, Customs Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>MBOTSARI, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>Lubomír</td>
<td>DOSKOCIL, General Directorate of Customs of the Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>George</td>
<td>MALLIOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>Henri</td>
<td>WELTER, Direction des Douanes et Accises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>SPITERI, Customs Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>René</td>
<td>JAKOBS, Ministry of Finance / Team Customs and Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Bram</td>
<td>VAN DEN BRABER, Customs Region West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TK</td>
<td>Nezaket</td>
<td>GÜRSOY, Undersecretariat for Customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Sharon</td>
<td>MOLE, HM Revenue &amp; Customs</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>SHERIDAN, HM Revenue &amp; Customs</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>Valerie</td>
<td>TAYLOR, HM Revenue &amp; Customs</td>
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<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Karlheinz</td>
<td>KADNER, DG TAXUD, Unit C3 : Risk management, security and specific controls</td>
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</table>
**Subgroup 2**

**Rapporteur: Gerhard MAROSI, Austria**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>HERRMANN Bundesministerium der Finanzen, Referat III B 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>Reino</td>
<td>KAARIO Tullihallitus - National Board of Customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>JANKOWIAK Ministère de l’Economie des finances et de l’Industrie –</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Direction générale des douanes et droits indirects (DGDDI),</td>
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<td>Sous direction du commerce international (E),</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bureau prohibitions et protection du consommateur (E2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>Aivairs</td>
<td>KUZNECOVS Head of the Customs Methodology Division</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clearance Organization Subdivision, National Customs Board,</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State Revenue Service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>Gerhard</td>
<td>MAROSI Federal Ministry of Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Monika</td>
<td>GUMIELA Ministry of Finance Customs Policy Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>AYRES MARTINS Direcção-Geral das Alfândegas e dos Impostos Especiais sobre</td>
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<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Gabriela</td>
<td>ENE The customs national Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Jonas</td>
<td>KARLSSON Swedish Customs Law enforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>Vojko</td>
<td>OTOVIC Customs Administration of the Republic Slovenia</td>
</tr>
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<td>COM</td>
<td>André</td>
<td>BERENDS DG TAXUD, Unit C3: Risk management, security and specific controls</td>
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</table>
## Veterinary Experts

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Anton</td>
<td>BARTL</td>
<td>Bundesministerium für Gesundheit und Frauen Abteilung IV/5</td>
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<td>FI</td>
<td>Leena</td>
<td>EEROLA</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Food and Health, Animal Health and Welfare Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Ute</td>
<td>GRAMM</td>
<td>Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg, Behörde für Wissenschaft und Gesundheit, Amt für Gesundheit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Koos</td>
<td>WARMERHOVEN</td>
<td>Import and International Developments, The Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>BROOKS</td>
<td>International Animal Health Veterinary Division, DEFRA, Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>MILLS</td>
<td>Imports Border Controls, International Animal Health Division, Defra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>ELLIOTT</td>
<td>International Animal Health Division, DEFRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>SOTO</td>
<td>DG SANCO, Unit D1: animal health and standing committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Pierangelo</td>
<td>BERNORIO</td>
<td>DG SANCO, Unit D1: animal health and standing committees</td>
</tr>
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### Subgroup 3

**Rapporteur: Denis SHEEHAN, Ireland**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Jean ANDRÉ</td>
<td>SPF Finances -</td>
<td>Douanes et Accises</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frédéric</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taxcenter Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Henrik LASTEIN</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Rogelio GARCIA</td>
<td>Head of Area</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IE</td>
<td>Denis SHEEHAN</td>
<td>RP de l’Irlande</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Isabella IINTERLANDI</td>
<td>Customs agency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>Mindaugas BUTKUS</td>
<td>Customs Department under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Lithuania</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Peter KOVACS</td>
<td>Customs Directorate of The Slovak Republic, Section of operational activities, Risk analysis department, Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>André BERENDS</td>
<td>DG TAXUD, Unit C3 : Risk management, security and specific controls</td>
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ANNEX 2
OBJECTIVES AND WORKING METHOD

Background

On 28 March 2006, Member States were invited to participate in a meeting organised by the Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union to discuss the possible recommendations to be used by Member States’ Customs authorities to combat the spread of Avian Influenza. During that meeting, which was attended by representatives of 21 Member States, the Commission presented a document with draft recommendations to improve Customs controls to prevent Avian Influenza from being introduced from third countries.

Member States welcomed the initiative and agreed on the general recommendations set out in the Commission document. Most recommendations directly relate to practical issues that need to be implemented by the national administrations. In order to help Member states to implement them, a Customs working group on Avian Influenza was established under the Customs 2007 programme.

The useful experience Member States Customs services gained during the outbreak of Avian Influenza in spring 2006 was taken as a starting point for further discussions. Taking into account the high risk of new outbreaks of Avian Influenza occurring in spring 2007 and the possible public health risks implications related to them, a tight working schedule was agreed that would allow conclusions to be reached by the end of March 2007.

Purpose/tasks

The group was established to study and develop commonly agreed Customs activities focussed on the prevention of introduction of Avian Influenza.

Working method

For logistical reasons, the full group was divided into 3 subgroups that focussed on the following issues:

- Customs controls (subgroup 1)
- Co-operation between Customs and Veterinary authorities/awareness raising (subgroup 2)
- Risk management and the exchange of information at national and Community level (subgroup 3)

The 3 subgroups, with comparable representation from a geographical point of view, were run and chaired by the Member States, with the Commission in a facilitating and observing role.

A number of meetings of the subgroups were hosted by Member States (AT, UK, LV, NL) that volunteered to host meetings of the subgroups. The meetings mostly were held next to important sea- or airports which were visited to gain a better and more practical understanding of the issues to be discussed. DE hosted the final plenary meeting of the full group in
Frankfurt am Main, allowing all participating countries to see the approach taken by the German administration in Europe's 2nd largest airport.

Each subgroup started its work by preparing a questionnaire that was sent to all Member States represented in the Customs Steering Group on Avian Influenza. The main conclusions drafted following the discussions of each subgroup are thus based on information given by almost all Member States. Due to the fact that 24 out of 27 Member States plus one candidate country participated in the Group, the results can be considered as representative of the Community as a whole.

Although the Group had been set up under the Customs 2007 programme to study and develop commonly agreed Customs activities focussed on the prevention of introduction of animal diseases such as Avian Influenza, the action was coordinated and fully supported by the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection (SANCO). This resulted in direct participation of SANCO staff and Member States Veterinary authorities, financed under the SANCO budget, in meetings of subgroup 2 (Co-operation between Customs and Veterinary authorities). This initiative is very positive and the input given considerably raises the profile in terms of co-operation between Customs and Veterinary services.

**Objectives:**

The following objectives were agreed upon:

**Full group:**

- Establish a group of Customs experts that can quickly exchange information and agree on Customs actions to combat health risks related to the introduction of goods in the Community, and in particular those related to Avian Influenza.

- Study and develop commonly agreed Customs activities focussed on the prevention of introduction of Avian Influenza.

- Guide subgroups, to ensure they fulfil their tasks appropriately (if relevant)

**Group 1 (Customs controls):**

- Review of the control situation in place during the epidemic in spring 2006 and to propose options to enhance controls, not only on commercial consignments but also on travellers' luggage

**Group 2 (co-operation between Customs and Veterinary authorities/awareness raising):**

- Analyse the situation regarding co-operation between Customs and Veterinary services in different Member States at national and local level

- Develop options for an improved co-operation, if relevant.

- Propose ways to improve European citizens' awareness on the type of risks related to the import of products of animal origin.
**Group 3 (Risk management and the exchange of information at national and Community level):**

- Develop risk indicators for the selection of consignments and best practices to be shared at national and Community level.

**Timing**

29-11-2006  First meeting (plenary session) in the morning and subgroup meeting in the afternoon (Brussels)

11/12-01-2007  Second meeting of subgroup 2 (Vienna - Vienna airport)

16-01-2007  Second meeting of subgroup 1 (London)

16-01-2007  Second meeting of subgroup 3 (Brussels)

15/16-02-2007  Third meeting of subgroup 2 (Riga - Riga port)

19/20-02-2007  Third meeting of subgroup 1 (Hoofddorp - Schiphol)

06-03-2007  Third meeting of subgroup 3 (Brussels)

29/30-03-2007  Final meeting of plenary group (Frankfurt am Main + airport)

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