SUMMARY RECORD
OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 8 DECEMBER 2005

Section Animal Health and Welfare
Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain

President: Bernard Van Goethem and Alberto Laddomada
For point 5: Paola Testori Coggi

All Member States were present, except Malta absent but represented by Greece. Italy was absent for point 23 but represented by Ireland.

1. Information on the avian influenza situation in Asia, Romania, Croatia and Turkey

The Romanian delegation gave an update of the avian influenza situation in Romania. For surveillance purposes the hunting of wild birds is allowed in some areas. In Tulca county samples are taken by month from domestic and wild birds.

The Commission announced that it would like Romanian ornithologists to participate in the working group meetings on 9 and 10 January. (See also Miscellaneous)

The Commission’s representative outlined that no new outbreaks were detected in Croatia and Turkey. In Russia no new outbreaks have been found since early November and no human cases were found there. China has reported more human cases; outbreaks in poultry are notified almost every week in different provinces. The plan is to vaccinate all domestic poultry in China but the Commission has not received further information with regard to this issue. The situation in Thailand is stable, 4 confirmed cases in humans. In Vietnam more outbreaks were detected and a nationwide vaccination campaign of poultry has been launched.

Ukraine has found an outbreak of H5 on the peninsula. The exact typing of the virus is not yet known. The import of untreated feathers from Ukraine should therefore be blocked. No further information is currently available. (See also point 11)

In Zimbabwe H5 was found in a ratite but no further information is available at the moment. Imports were suspended voluntarily by Zimbabwe. Following the latest report from Kuwait the suspicion of H5N1 in a flamingo can not be confirmed.

2. Information from Member States on avian influenza vaccination in zoos

Via a “Tour de table” the Member States presented their approach on avian influenza vaccination in zoos. Some Member States consider vaccinating zoo birds but the majority of Member States does –at the moment- not intend to use vaccination in zoos. The Commission announced that a special meeting on vaccination in zoos could be scheduled, if necessary, following the working group meeting of 10 January 2006.
3. Information and exchange of views on two draft Decisions concerning
- certain interim protection measures in relation to a suspicion or a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza in wild birds (SANCO/10561/2005 – Rev. 5)
- certain interim protection measures in relation to a suspicion or an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry (SANCO/10558/2005 – Rev.5)

The Commission outlined that the above versions have been sent to the Commission’s Translation Service in order to provide Member States with a basic text which is going to be further revised in January. The Commission thanked the Member States for sending their comments.

4. Information on the FMD situation in Brazil

The Commission updated the Committee on the situation of FMD in Brazil. Documents SANCO/10693/2005 “Brazil – List of municipalities of the Brazilian States of Mato Grosso do Sul, Mato Grosso and Minas Gerais” and SANCO/10689/2005 “Update information on the FMD situation in Brazil” were distributed. A meeting with the Brazilian authorities (ambassador and CVO) is being organised for next week. Several remarks were made by the Member States which will be submitted to the Brazilian authorities.

5. Information of the United Kingdom and the other Member States concerning the investigations related to a cold store in Northern Ireland (see RASFF 2005/833 and follow-up)

The Commission gave follow-up information on the incident at a cold store in Northern Ireland. The UK authorities have informed the Commission through the RASFF (2005/833) on 17 November about fraudulently exported beef consignments from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands, involving falsified health marks imitating genuine Spanish, Dutch, German and Irish health marks. The Commission made it very clear that no product could leave the establishment concerned and that the investigations of the seized products should be done according an agreed protocol between UK and the Commission. If the legal power would not be within the Member States the Commission would be ready to act and take a decision itself.

UK informed the Committee that legal action has been taken which will block all products on site. UK will confirm this in writing on Friday 9 December 2005. Due to the uncertainty on the origin of the products, the Commission advised the Member States to apply the precautionary principle by destroying the products or to send them back to UK. On the long term, the Commission wants to investigate the need for additional legal measures to prevent the current situation.

The Commission also stressed the need to inform directly through the RASFF system all other Member States without any delay about findings of fraudulent nature.

The Commission stressed how important it is that UK authorities continue to control the situation and requested the UK to provide the Commission with a detailed
chronology of the events by 12 December so as to allow the Commission to circulate it to the Member States through the RASFF.

Representatives of the Food Standard Agency – Northern Ireland presented the Member States an Update on Investigation into a cold store in Northern Ireland. They stressed the difficulty in sorting out information which is constrained due to the legal situation. On 28 November FVO officials visited Northern Ireland where the situation was discussed with officials from the Food Standards Authority and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. A second investigation was carried out by the FVO involving OLAF from 5-7 December 2005. A detailed report of the FVO missions is not yet available. The UK delegate stated that the scale and complexity of this problem is increasing and that UK is trying hard to get the situation under control, but emphasizes that it would need the help from other Member States and the Commission.

The Belgian delegation gave a presentation on an investigation on possible meat fraud linked to cold storage which was conducted due to the request from Northern Ireland to verify the authenticity of the Belgian identification marks. The objectives of the Belgian mission to UK were to verify the batch number, the authenticity of labels and the contents of boxes. The outcome of the mission was that there is no evidence of the presence of condemned meat. The labels that were present in the cold storage facilities were authentic. The Commission thanked Belgium for its detailed report and for the summary of the findings in Ireland.

The issue will be re-discussed at the SCFCAH Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain on 21-22 December.

6. Information from France and Slovakia on the Newcastle Disease situation

France briefly updated the Committee on the outbreak of Newcastle Disease in a holding of 8,500 pigeons in the département Ille-et-Vilaine. The most likely source of this outbreak is wild fauna. On 8 November the Commission and O.I.E have been notified and following the confirmation of the outbreak, surveillance zones have been established around the affected holding.

The Slovak delegation updated the Committee on the Newcastle Disease situation. Since 4 November extraordinary measures such as emergency vaccination are applied by the Slovakian authorities.

7. Information by Romania and Bulgaria on the classical swine fever situation and eradication strategy

Romania and Bulgaria have committed themselves to stop prophylactic vaccination against classical swine fever by the end of 2005. An overview on the current situation and perspectives are given.

The Bulgarian delegation distributed and presented “Information on the epizootic situation with regard to Classical swine fever in the Republic of Bulgaria as of 01 December 2005”. Pursuant to the commitment to cease prophylactic vaccination against classical swine fever, the use of C-strain vaccine was stopped throughout the
Bulgarian territory on 1 September 2005. Classical swine fever virus is claimed to be endemic among certain subpopulations of the pig population and it is feared that after the cessation of vaccination the disease will spread throughout the country.

The Commission fully shares the concerns that were expressed by several Member States on the classical swine fever situation in Bulgaria. No evidence however is presented that confirms the endemic presence of classical swine fever in domestic pigs. As regards the immediate future, it is clear that in the first place Bulgaria has to substantiate the situation of classical swine fever as soon as possible. The Commission will support Bulgaria in this process. A valid and efficient strategy needs to be conceived and implemented. The Commission announced that a technical meeting is scheduled involving representatives from the Commission and the Bulgarian delegation.

The Romanian delegation distributed and presented “Romania 2005 Classical Swine Fever”. Romania, in cooperation with community experts, has developed a strategic plan for monitoring, control and eradication of classical swine fever after the cessation of prophylactic vaccination. The Directive 2001/89/EEC has been fully transposed. The current classical swine fever situation can be considered as endemic. The control program foresees therefore an emergency vaccination of wild boar and domestic pigs.

The Commission has evaluated Romania’s strategy and considers it as valid; however, it needs to be amended on certain issues. The Commission stated that several experts groups will be made available as so to have a follow-up on the Romanian strategy. Several Member States appreciated the transparent presentations by Romania and Bulgaria and shared the concern as regards a possible spread of classical swine fever after the cessation of vaccination in January 2006 in both Romania and Bulgaria. An urgent eradication strategy therefore should be drawn up and implemented in the two countries.

8. Information and follow-up on animal health conditions and certification for importation from third countries of certain live animals covered by Directive 92/65/EEC (HB) (see point 8 of SCFCAH 13-14 September 2005, point 7 of SCFCAH 5 October 2005 and point 6 of SCFCAH 10-11 November 2005)

The Commission explained that this point relates to the certification for importation from third countries and reminded Member States to send their information in particular model certificates on this issue to the Commission.


The Commission explained that Article 5 1 b) of the Regulation 998/2003 provides that the validity of the vaccine is the one which is recommended by the manufacturing laboratory in the Member State where the vaccine has been administrated to the animal and as a consequence the date mentioned in the page of the passport relating to rabies vaccination. A Member State has to recognise the certification of a veterinarian in another Member State of a validity which differs from the one which applies on its territory.
10. Distribution of a CD with applications for VHS/IHN approval of fish farms and zones pursuant to Directive 91/67/EEC

The CD containing 18 applications for farms and zones has been distributed to all the Member States. Member States are requested to sent comments and objections before the end of office hours 16 December.

11. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision on the evolution of animal diseases in the Community and in third countries, in particular in relation to avian influenza in Turkey, Croatia and Romania

The Commission presented a draft Commission Decision “concerning certain protection measures in relation to a suspicion of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Ukraine” (SANCO/10680/2005 Rev. 1)

The purpose of the proposal is to ban the importation of untreated feathers following the avian influenza H5 confirmation by the Ukrainian authorities of 5 December.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.

12. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2004/233/EC as regards the list of laboratories authorised to check the effectiveness of vaccination against rabies in certain domestic carnivores (SANCO/10569/2005 Rev. 1)

The purpose of this decision is to add a laboratory in Germany to the list of authorized laboratories in the Member States set out in the Annex to Decision 2004/233/EC.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.

13. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2005/393/EC as regards the restricted zones in relation to bluetongue in Portugal and Spain (SANCO/10640/2005)

The Commission’s representative explained that Spain and Portugal have informed the Commission that virus circulation has been detected in a number of new peripheral areas of the restricted zone concerning serotype 4. Consequently, the restricted zones should be extended taking account of the data available on the ecology of the vector and the evolution of its seasonal activity.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.

The point has been withdrawn from the agenda.


The Commission explained that this draft decision aims at the regionalisation of Namibia, Brazil and South Africa for the import of fresh meat into the Community.

The Commission intends to proceed to a vote at the SCFCAH on 21 December.


The Commission explained that in order to ensure clarity, coherence and transparency in the regionalisation concerning importation of fresh meat it is necessary to amend certain of the regionalisation descriptions and timing restrictions for Brazil. Furthermore, Montenegro and Serbia were listed as separate identities.

The Commission intends to proceed to a vote at the SCFCAH on 21 December.

17. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision granting certain Member States the derogation provided for in Article 3(2) of Council Directive 92/102/EEC on the identification and registration of animals (SANCO/10362/2005)

The authorities of the Czech Republic, France, Poland and Slovakia have requested this authorisation as regards holdings with one single pig and have given the appropriate assurances in respect of veterinary controls. Therefore the Czech Republic, France, Poland and Slovakia should be authorised to apply the derogation, which has already been granted to Portugal and Italy. The derogation is granted to these six Member States that are listed in the Annex.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.
18. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision amending Decision 2005/237/EC as regards the financial aid from the Community for the operation of the Avian Influenza Community reference laboratory in 2005 (SANCO/10543/2005/Rev.2)

The Commission has analysed the recent information provided by the Community reference laboratory for avian influenza on the expenditure required for 2005. Taking into account that information, the Community’s financial contribution to that laboratory needs to be adjusted and it is therefore appropriate to allocate additional funding for 2005.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.

19. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision laying down a list of third countries from which poultry, hatching eggs, day-old chicks, poultry meat and wild game-bird meat, eggs and egg products for human consumption and specified pathogen-free eggs may be imported into and pass in transit through the Community and the applicable veterinary-certification conditions and amending Decisions 93/342/EEC, 2000/585/EC and 2003/812/EC. (SANCO/10361/2004 Rev.10) (RF) (See point 20 of SCFCAH of 13-14 September 2005 and point 29 of SCFCAH of 5 October 2005 and point 9 of SCFCAH of 10-11 November 2005)

The Commission outlined several changes in wording that have been made to this draft proposal. The Commission will take the comments by Member States into consideration and provide them with a revised draft decision for the next Committee.

The Commission intends to proceed to a vote at the SCFCAH on 21 December.


The Commission’s representative explained that problems have been encountered in trade in embryos in particular following the adoption of stricter rules for the admission of bulls into semen collection centres in Directive 88/407/EEC, as amended by Directive 2003/43/EC. In order to avoid certification problems, an additional certification requirement should be included in the current model animal health certificate providing for an obligation that semen used for fertilisation is to comply with Directive 88/407/EEC.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.
21. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision concerning a financial contribution by the Community for the implementation of an epidemiological survey and bluetongue surveillance measures in the context of the emergency measures taken to combat this disease in Portugal in 2004 and 2005 (SANCO/3425/2005/Rev.1)

The Commission’s representative explained that, pending on-the-spot checks carried out by the Commission, it is now necessary to fix the first instalment of the Community financial contribution. That first instalment should be equal to 50% of the Community contribution, established on the basis of the estimated eligible expenditure of epidemiological surveillance measures. It is furthermore appropriate to fix the maximum amounts to be reimbursed for the cost of tests and traps used in the framework of these measures. Portugal has fulfilled all the technical and administrative obligations with regard to the measures provided for in Decision 90/424/EEC.

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece.

22. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision establishing the Community’s financial contribution to the expenditure incurred in the context of the emergency measures taken to combat classical swine fever in Luxembourg in 2002 (SANCO/3507/2005)

The point has been withdrawn from the agenda.

CODIFICATION

“Codification” is the procedure where the legislation being codified is repealed and replaced by a single act containing all the relevant provisions. It involves the examination of existing provisions and their reworking (deleting obsolete provisions, harmonising terminology and determining the motivation) in a comprehensive and coherent manner without changing their substance. The process reduces the mass of the legislation while maintaining the substance of the legislation.

The Codification project is intended to last four years beginning in January 2002 and its purpose is to codify the secondary legislation of the EU that the Acceding States have to adopt unamended. The project, partly formulated to reduce the mass of legislation which the Acceding States have to translate, revise and implement, will also benefit the existing Member States.

The Legal Service (Codification Group) will be responsible for the legal examination and reworking of the legal texts proposed for codification, in conjunction with the competent DG.

23. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision on certain protection measures with regard to certain
fruit bats, dogs and cats coming from Malaysia (Peninsula) and Australia (codified version of SANCO/507/1999)

Vote: All the Member States present voted in favour. Malta absent but represented by Greece. Italy absent but represented by Ireland.

Miscellaneous

1) DE and SV –The German and the Swedish delegations requested the Commission to send the information on avian influenza by email instead of by Fax.

2) SV- Sweden informed the Committee that it has detected a suspicion of Newcastle Disease and will keep the Commission informed about the evolution of the disease.

3) The Commission reminded the Member States on the two working group meetings scheduled for 9 and 10 January 2006. The results obtained from monitoring in wild birds will be discussed on 9 of January. The Committee will have to consider that the current monitoring programs come to an end on 31 January 2006. EFSA will be invited to this meeting.

The meeting on 10 January foresees a discussion on vaccination against avian influenza. The Commission will ask representatives of four pharmaceutical companies and representatives from the agricultural sector to participate in this meeting. Furthermore, EFSA and EMEA representatives will be invited.
N.B. The proposals on which the Committee expressed an opinion are subject to a defined procedure in relation to the formal adoption by the Commission.

Mission reports are available on the Internet at the following address: http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/inspections/vi/reports/index_en.html

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