SUMMARY REPORT OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 12 DECEMBER 2012
(Section Biological Safety of the Food chain)

Chair: K. Van Dyck.
All Members States were represented.
Croatia attended the meeting as an observer.

A.1 Request from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Reference Laboratory Listeria (ANSES, FR) on the possible use of Pulsed Field Gel Electroforesis (PFGE) subtyping for comparing Listeria monocytogenes isolates from food coordinated monitoring program with human isolates collected in the same period

A request from the EFSA and the ECDC to use the data from the baseline survey on the prevalence of Listeria monocytogenes in three ready-to-eat food categories (cheese, meat products and fish products) was unanimously approved by the Member States.

A.2 Discussion and possible endorsement of a vision paper on the development of data bases for molecular testing of foodborne pathogens in view of outbreak preparedness

A vision paper on a database for the molecular testing of food-borne isolates was presented to the Member States for endorsement. The paper is part of the response to lessons learned from the E. coli crisis. A database with isolates from food and animals would be managed by the EFSA and one with human isolates by the ECDC. The EU References Laboratories (EURL) would also be involved. The vision paper was well received and endorsed by unanimity with minor deletions.

A.3 Call for experts for a restricted Working Group to assess an update of EU Guides to Good Hygiene Practice (GGHP) in primary production and to discuss a common set of principles for the Management of the Salmonella Risk in the Feed Chain

The Commission suggested that experts assess the EU Guides to Good Hygiene Practice in a restricted Working Group meeting on 30 January 2013. Applications are to be submitted before the end of 2012.
The Commission presented revision 7 of a draft Regulation updating six of the annexes to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001. Proposed amendments include: the repeal of most of the restrictions in cases of atypical scrapie; clarification of the eradication options for classical scrapie; the establishment of a status for classical scrapie on holding (controlled risk and negligible risk); the alignment of intra-EU trade conditions in sheep and goats with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) code; the alignment of import measures regarding collagen with those already applicable to gelatine; and the introduction of a new obligation to submit all future bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) cases to discriminatory testing to distinguish between cases of classical and atypical BSE. One Member State expressed strong concerns about the new provisions in Annex VIII, arguing that they imposed an unnecessary administrative burden.

Vote taken: Qualified majority (335 votes in favour, 10 votes against).

The Commission presented revision 3 of a draft Implementing Regulation repealing Regulation (EC) No 546/2006 and Implementing Regulation (EU) No 233/2012, both regarding the approved national scrapie control programmes and additional guarantees. The provisions of the two Regulations to be repealed have been incorporated in the new Annex VIII to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 (see point B.1).

Vote taken: Qualified majority (335 votes in favour, 10 votes against).

The Commission presented revision 1 of a draft Implementing Decision amending Decision 2009/719/EC so as to allow 25 Member States to stop testing healthy slaughtered cattle for BSE. No obligation is attached to the measure. In line with Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 999/2001, tests of healthy slaughtered cattle older than 30 months, if maintained, will continue to be co-financed by the Commission. Member States were advised that they may test only a fraction of healthy slaughtered cattle over 72 months old as of 1 January 2013, but were not allowed to stop testing before entry into force of the draft Implementing Decision (probably in March 2013). Two Member States expressed concerns about not testing older animals, particularly those born before enforcement of the feed ban.
Vote taken: Qualified majority (287 votes in favour, 58 abstentions).

B.4 Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Regulation amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the requirements concerning frozen food of animal origin (TECHNICAL AGREEMENT)

Since 1 July 2012, it has been obligatory to make the production and freezing dates of all frozen food of animal origin available to the food business operator to whom it is supplied. Several Member States and stakeholders’ organisations have pointed to practical difficulties in fulfilling this obligation, in particular for certain frozen fish-based products. The proposed amendment addresses the difficulties whilst ensuring that the information on the age of the food or its raw material is still available. The Commission said the discussion would be postponed until the finalisation of the ongoing procedure regarding Regulation on a Common Organisation of the Market for Fishery and Aquaculture Products, currently under discussion with the European Parliament and the Council.

Vote postponed

C.1 Exchange of views of the Committee on a draft Commission Implementing Decision authorising the use of at risk bovine animals until the end of their productive lives in Spain following official confirmation of the presence of BSE

The Commission presented a draft Implementing Decision to allow Spain to use bovine animals epidemiologically linked to a BSE case until the end of their productive lives, given that the movement restrictions and traceability ensured by its official control measures are sufficient to preserve current levels of human and animal protection. There were no comments from the Member States. The draft will be submitted to a vote at the next Standing Committee meeting in 2013.

M.1 Rules related to sprouts and sprouted seeds

Member States were informed of the entry into force on 1 July 2013 of rules on sprouts and sprouted seeds.

M.2 Trichinella

Some laboratories have had difficulties with the accreditation of the method for Trichinella detection, due to a discrepancy between the text of the Regulation and the manufacturer’s protocol for the test kit validated by the EURL for parasites. The Commission said it intended to amend the Regulation to bring it into line with the validated protocol. In the meantime, the EURL will advise national reference laboratories on the correct application of the method.

M.3 Budget
At the Standing Committee meeting of 4 December, a draft Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 926/2011 regarding EU reference laboratories’ expenditure eligibility had been presented for information and discussion (under item C.2). Changes requested by some services in interservice consultation were being introduced and the finalised document would first be sent to animal health experts and then voted on by the Standing Committee on Animal Nutrition on 14 December. Member States were asked to pass on the information so that experts could provide Standing Committee representatives with their voting instructions.

M.4 Animal Welfare

The Commission presented a statement on import conditions relating to animal welfare. Member States asked for more time to liaise with their experts and proposed certain changes. The statement would be discussed again at the Animal Nutrition Committee meeting on Friday 14 December.