SHORT REPORT
OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 19-20 NOVEMBER 2002
(Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain)
(Section Controls and Import Conditions)
(Section Animal Health and Welfare)

President: Mr. Eric Poudelet for points 1, 2 and 6 to 13, Mrs. Patricia Brünko for points 3 and 19, Mr. Michael Scannell for points 4, 5, 14 to 17, Mr. Paul Van Geldorp for point 18 and Mr. Bernard Van Goethem for point 20.

All the Member States were present.

1. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON A POSSIBLE BAN ON THE IMPORT AND PLACING ON THE MARKET OF FISH OF THE SPECIES "RUVETTUS PRETIOSUS" AND "LEPIDOCYBIUM FLAVOBRUNNEUM"

The Commission briefly outlined the background to a problem which had been identified by Italy and France. Fish known as “Escolar” (Lepidocybium flavobrunneum) and “Oilfish” (Ruvettus pretiosus) contain strong purgative oil, called gempylotoxin. The diarrhoea caused by eating the oil contained in the flesh and bones of these fish develops rapidly and is pronounced but generally occurs without pain or cramping.

After having heard the points of view of the Member States, the Commission suggested to await the adoption of the relevant Council Regulation currently being discussed and to evaluate the necessity of a risk assessment pending this new Regulation.


The Commission presented the mission report and reported on the main findings. The objective of the mission was to carry out an evaluation of the system of controls of fishery products (Council Directive 91/493/EEC) originating in Sri Lanka and intended for export to the EU, with a view to deciding whether the country could be added to part I of the Annex of Decision 97/296/EC (list of third countries approved for export to the EU).

The Commission presented the conclusions and a number of recommendations.
3. **Information - Plans for amending Commission Decision 2002/657/EC to include Minimum Required Performance Limits (MRPLs) for:**

*Nitrofurans metabolites in aquaculture products and poultry meat; Medroxy Progesterone Acetate in kidney fat; Chloramphenicol in meat, aquaculture, milk, eggs, urine and honey.*

The Commission informed the Committee of the intention to soon amend Decision 2002/657/EC by including MRPLs (minimum required performance limits) for certain combinations substances/matrixes.

Due to the finding of residues of Chloramphenicol and Nitrofurans in food of animal origin from third countries, and the MPA contamination, several discussions with Member States, Community Reference Laboratories and National Reference Laboratories have taken place during 2002. The need to achieve a harmonized approach in all MS has been stressed.

It was explained that for the future, MRPLs will be proposed after discussion with the CRLs and NRLs and then presented to the Standing Committee as amendments to Commission Decision 2002/657/EC. It was clarified that the MRPLs should be considered the minimum that the analytical method should detect.

4. **Information from Sweden, France and the Netherlands on the investigations carried out about the origin of contamination of casings by nitrofurans signaled by China**

Sweden explained that the casings in which nitrofuran residues were detected came from animals raised in Sweden and fed only with Swedish made feed.

Nitrofuran testing has been included in the national residue monitoring plan for aquaculture and poultry products for 2002. No nitrofuran sampling has been carried out in pigs since 1994, but will be reintroduced.

As casings from different origins are being mixed in China, additional information on the traceability has been requested in order to verify that those casings were really of Swedish origin.

France explained that the casings sent to China were of USA, Denmark and France origin (for pig casings) and of Australia, New Zealand and USA origin (for sheep casings). Therefore France is not the only possible origin of the nitrofurans.

The Netherlands investigations are not finished, the involved company is no longer slaughtering pigs.

The Commission requested France and the Netherlands to provide these explanations in writing (Response from Sweden has been already received).
5. **INFORMATION ON THE SAMPLING STRATEGIES APPLIED FOR CONTROLS BY MEMBER STATES AT THE BORDER INSPECTION POSTS**

The Commission explained that this issue had been already addressed at several meetings. At the meeting held on 22 November 2001 with Member States experts, proposals from Germany and Belgium were discussed but no conclusions were agreed.

The Commission explained that several factors have to be taken into account: package size, bulked materials, type of consignments, if lots are homogeneous or not, sampling pooling or not, etc.

After the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on 24 October 2002, Member States were requested to send the Commission the sampling procedure applied in their BIPs for aquaculture products coming from third countries for nitrofurans control. Contributions from Italy, UK, the Netherlands and Germany had been received. The other Member States were asked to send their sampling strategies including information on the size and features of the consignments, sampling procedures etc. before 30 November.

The Commission will compile all the responses. On this basis, the Commission will draft a proposal for discussion with the experts.

6. **PRELIMINARY INFORMATION ON THE TRENDS AND SOURCES OF ZOONOTIC INFECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY IN 2001**

The Commission presented the preliminary results as regards the prevalence of zoonotic agents in foodstuffs and animals and zoonotic diseases in humans in 2001. Some Member States have not yet provided their full reports. Hence, the results presented were only partially indicative.

The Member States concerned were requested to provide the missing data as soon as possible.

7. **FOLLOW-UP OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RAPID ALERTS IN THE MICROBIOLOGICAL RISKS FIELD: (1) INFORMATION FROM THE UK AND SPAIN ON A OUTBREAK OF SALMONELLA LINKED TO THE CONSUMPTION OF TABLE EGGS; (2) INFORMATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS ON A FRAUD CONCERNING EGG PRODUCTS.**

Since the beginning of September 2002, the United Kingdom (UK) has recorded a number of outbreaks of human salmonellosis. There were over 300 people ill and 7 persons died in these outbreaks associated with the use of table eggs in the production of various foodstuffs. According to data provided by the UK authorities, these outbreaks are associated or suspected of being associated with eggs coming from Spain. The Spanish authorities carried out investigations in two manufacturers located in two Autonomous Communities (Madrid and Valencia), where they
believe the eggs could have originated from. The results of the tests performed on both egg and environmental samples from the company in Madrid were all favourable. In the holding based in Valencia, the investigations showed the presence of some Salmonella but from different serotypes than that incriminated in the UK outbreaks.

The Dutch delegation updated the Committee on a fraud in relation to egg products which occurred in 2000. The case had been investigated and will result in a court case. The establishment concerned has been closed.

8. INFORMATION TO GERMANY ON THE ADDITIONAL PAYMENT TO BE MADE IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE 2001 BSE MONITORING PROGRAMME

The European Commission informed Germany on the additional payment to be made in the framework of the 2001 BSE monitoring programme. The German Delegation welcomed the information.

9. PRESENTATION BY SWEDEN OF THE STATE OF PLAY AND SITUATION CONCERNING THE SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME OF CAMPYLOBACTER IN BROILERS


The Swedish delegation backed up its above application by presenting a report on the summary results of its Campylobacter surveillance programme for the period 1 July 2001-30 June 2002.

The Commission subsequently presented a draft Decision for a specific financial contribution for the renewal of the above surveillance programme (see point 13).

10. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND POSSIBLE OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON A DRAFT COMMISSION DECISION LAYING DOWN GUIDELINES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BREEDING PROGRAMMES FOR RESISTANCE TO TRANSMISSIBLE Spongiform Encephalopathies IN SHEEP (SANCO/1803/2002 - REV.7)

The Commission distributed and presented the above proposal. This initial draft Decision stipulated that:

– Member States would complete a survey of the prion protein genotype of each of its pure-bred sheep breeds which are native, or which contribute significantly to the gene pool of the sheep population on its territory;
– on the basis of the outcome of that survey, Member States would introduce a breeding programme to select for resistance to TSEs in each of its sheep breeds which are native, or which form a significant population in its territory;
by 1 October 2003, Member States would establish a framework to recognise the TSE-resistant status of certain sheep flocks.

The proposal also specifies the recommended guidelines for implementation, which are based on the opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee of 4-5 April 2002 on safe sourcing of small ruminant materials.

It appeared from the comprehensive discussion that followed that most of the Member States asked for more time to consider certain aspects of the breeding programme, but strongly supported the immediate implementation of the prion protein genotype survey.

The Commission consequently presented a revised proposal:

**Draft Commission Decision laying down minimum requirements for a survey of prion protein genotypes of sheep breeds (SANCO/1803/2002-Rev.9).**

This new draft provided for the completion, by 1 July 2003, of a survey of the prion protein genotype of each of its sheep breeds which are native, or form a significant population in its territory.

**Vote: 83 votes in favour, 4 abstentions (qualified majority)**

The Commission made the following declaration:

"The Commission commits itself to present to the Standing Committee for the Food Chain and Animal Health of December 2002 a new proposal relating to the breeding programme for sheep and to the TSE-resistant status of certain flocks."

In the margin of the above discussion, the UK informed the Committee about a laboratory experiment in which BSE has been produced in ARR/ARR sheep by intra-cerebral inoculation of infective material.


The Commission explained that in its 4-5 April 2002 opinion on safe sourcing of small ruminant materials the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) recommended that where a case of scrapie is diagnosed in a small ruminant holding, the entire flock should be culled. The SSC has however also indicated that culling sheep of the ARR/ARR prion protein genotype would carry little risk reducing benefit. To
avoid discouraging reporting of disease and to safeguard breeds which may carry a low level of resistance, the Commission proposed that this culling should be achieved gradually. To be consistent with such rules for culling, the Commission accordingly proposed to amend the rules for intra-community trade in breeding sheep to remove scrapie-related restrictions from trade in sheep of the ARR/ARR genotype.

The subsequent discussion revealed that most of the Member States did not agree to the provision that no ovine or caprine animals may be kept on the culled holding for the following three years.

The vote was postponed.

In addition to the above proposal, the Commission distributed the following document:


The proposal aims to amend the import rules for live ovine and caprine animals in order to reflect the changes introduced by the above-mentioned draft Regulation and to expand the list of products subjected to imports conditions on certain food supplements.


The purpose of the draft Decision is to lay down specific health rules for the putting on the market and imports of collagen intended for human consumption, covering (i) establishments producing collagen, (ii) raw materials and establishments supplying them, (iii) finished products, (iv) packaging, storage and transport and (v) importation of collagen and raw material destined for the production of collagen intended for human consumption. The proposal also intends to draw up model health certificates to accompany the imported collagen and raw material destined for the production of collagen intended for human consumption.

Vote: unanimous vote in favour.

13. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND POSSIBLE OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON A DRAFT COMMISSION DECISION CONCERNING A SPECIFIC FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION BY THE COMMUNITY RELATING TO THE SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME OF
14. **Exchange of Views and Possible Opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Decision on the List of Establishments in the Falkland Islands Approved for the Purpose of Importing Fresh Meat into the Community (Doc. SANCO/10414/2002-rev.2)**

The Member States considered a draft Decision aiming to list the approved establishment for fresh meat in the Falkland Islands from which Member States may authorise imports of fresh meat.

**Vote: unanimous vote in favour.**


The purpose of the proposal was to update the list of border inspection posts for veterinary checks to take account of developments in certain Member States. The list of ANIMO units must be updated accordingly.

**Vote: unanimous vote in favour.**


The Member States were presented a draft Decision proposing to authorise imports of crayfish and surimi from China subject to intensified monitoring and testing of imports of these products applying to 20% of consignments arriving at Community border inspection posts. Imports of these products were suspended following the detection of residues of prohibited substances like chloramphenicol and nitrofurans and the shortcomings as regards de control of residues of veterinary drugs in China, identified during an on-the-spot inspection visit.
Vote: unanimous vote in favour.

The Commission gave an update of the general situation in China and made clear that the guarantees provided up-to-date do not allow further lifting of the import suspension. The Commission also informed that a new Joint technical meeting with China was scheduled for the following days and that the intention of the Commission was to propose to Chinese authorities, to move towards (1) regionalisation approach, (2) product-by-product approach, and (3) more exhaustive testing. This approach had been successfully implemented in Thailand. The Member States seemed to support this approach.

17. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision amending Decision 97/102/EC laying down special conditions governing imports of fishery and aquaculture products originating in Russia (Doc. SANCO/10557/2002-rev.1)

It had appeared that the inspection service in Russia nominated by Decision 2002/808/EC had not the power for the approval of establishments and vessels for the production of fishery and aquaculture products. The Member States were therefore presented a draft Decision aiming to modify the nomination of the relevant competent authority.

Vote: unanimous vote in favour.

The Commission provided Member States with a model of the new health certificate and requested Member States to inform the border inspection posts about the new certificate.

18. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision on the health certificates to be used for importation of certain products from New Zealand, within the framework of the Agreement between the European Community and New Zealand on sanitary measures applicable to trade in live animals and animal products (Doc. SANCO/10565/2002)

In compliance with Article 9 of the Veterinary Agreement between the European Community and New Zealand and Annex VII to it, the proposed draft Commission Decision implements the certification requirements for importation from New Zealand of products of animal origin for which full equivalence has been agreed by introducing new “simplified” certificates. As appropriate they must contain the additional attestations concerning animal welfare at slaughter, the special health status of Finland and Sweden and TSE. The draft also provides for transitional arrangements for consignments already in transport to the Community. The proposed Decision does not affect products of animal origin where it is indicated that the products may be imported into Member States under prevailing national
health conditions of the Member States pending adoption of harmonised import conditions.

Following its adoption and after the EC and New Zealand have notified each other in writing that the necessary administrative procedures have been concluded, the Veterinary Agreement enters into force in accordance with Article 18. From that date the “standstill” on certification conditions referred to in Council Decision 97/131/EC will end.

The vote was postponed, pending the adoption of the Council Decision providing for recognition of equivalence of certification systems for certain commodities and laying down the model health attestation to be included in the simplified official health certificate.


Member States were informed that the Commission has received a number of additional residue monitoring plans or guarantees for certain animal products from some third countries which were not previously included in the provisional list. The Commission therefore submitted a draft Decision to update the list of third countries complying with Directive 96/23/EC.

**Vote: 77 votes in favour, 10 abstentions (qualified majority).**

The German delegation made the following statement:

„Deutschland hat sich bei der Abstimmung über den o.g. Entscheidungsentwurf zur Änderung der Entscheidung 2000/159/EG der Stimme enthalten.

Begründung :

*In Art. 29 der Rückstandskontrollrichtlinie 96/23/EG ist eine vorläufige Genehmigung der Rückstandsüberwachungspläne der Drittländer nicht vorgesehen. Deutschland begrüßt zwar die intensiven Bemühungen der Kommission, die Pläne der Drittländer in Zukunft einer umfassenden Analyse und Bewertung zu unterziehen.

Deutschland ist jedoch der Auffassung, dass das derzeit praktizierte System der vorläufigen Zulassung in ein System der endgültigen Zulassung in Einklang mit Art. 29 der RL 96/23/EG überführt werden muss.“

20. **Exchange of Views and Possible Opinion of the Committee on a Draft Commission Decision Concerning Protection Measures Relating to**
NEWCASTLE DISEASE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (Doc. SANCO/10511/2002-REV. 4)

Following the confirmation of two outbreaks of Newcastle disease in poultry flocks in the State of California, the veterinary authorities of the United States of America have suspended all export certification for live poultry and hatching eggs, poultry meat and poultry meat products. The U.S.A authorities have subsequently communicated their regionalisation measures to the Commission. The Member States were therefore presented a draft Decision aiming to regionalise the territory of the U.S.A. for live poultry and poultry meat exports to the European Community.

Certain Member States expressed their reluctance deeming the proposed regionalisation premature and stating that the information provided had to be thoroughly assessed. Some Member States also mentioned the resistance from the U.S.A. that they encounter concerning their requests for regionalisation as regards classical swine fever.

The vote was not taken.

21. MISCELLANEOUS

(1) The Netherlands requested to be informed about the FVO inspections programme 2003.

(2) Germany asked for clarification as regards the wording of Article 1 of Decision 2002/805/EC concerning milk from Ukraine.

(3) Germany inquired about the commission’s consideration concerning honey and its microbiological risk for infants (botulism). The Commission said that labelling should be addressed in the Foodstuffs Committee.

(4) The United Kingdom asked if processed products made from shells of crustaceans fall under the application of the import ban of products of animal origin from China. The Commission confirmed.

(5) Denmark said to have taken knowledge of the outcome (minutes) of a fisheries industry/Commission meeting during which it had been stated that re-dispatch of consignments with residues of prohibited substances might be possible. The Commission made clear that these consignments have to be destroyed.

(6) The Irish Delegation announced the appointment of Patrick Rogan as Chief Veterinary Officer.

(7) The Austrian Delegation asked the European Commission whether measures had been taken on the issue of residues in fishery products originating from India. The Commission informed that the situation is being monitored very
closed and that the possibility to present safeguard measures is not excluded if the situation requires.

(8) The Commission informed the Member States about an opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee concerning TSE infectivity of ruminant tissue. Bovine tonsils should be regarded as SRM and therefore tongues ought to be shortened in order not to include lingual tonsils. Moreover, the slaughter process should be examined to avoid any possible contamination of the cheek meat. Modification of the current rules will be proposed.

(9) The Commission recalled the obligation to inform all BIPs of all rejections of products based on human health reasons as laid down in Article 50 of Regulation (EC) No2002/178. The notifications should be made through the RASFF. To this end some Member States, were reminded to send the e-mail addresses of BIPs to be incorporated into the RASFF.

(10) Screening test for antimicrobial inhibitors: The Commission reminded that positive results from screening tests should be confirmed by a confirmatory analysis (Decision 2002/657/EC). Positives based on the inhibition of bacterial growth (4 plate test and similar) provide limited information on the specific antibiotic and its concentration. Furthermore screening tests are by definition aimed to avoid the presence of false negatives and the rate of false positives is relatively high.

(11) Spain explained that the information in the certificate should also be considered, for example type of products, they also replied that in Spain the sample is divided in three and therefore a contradictory analysis could be requested by the importer.

(12) The United Kingdom called for the Member States’ suggestions to avoid cross-contamination while screening sheep carcasses for scrapie.

(13) The Commission reported on the action plan set up by the Thai authorities to control and analyse the presence of nitrofurans and chloramphenicol in food of animal origin. Following the satisfactory results of this effort, the Commission intends to submit a proposal aiming to lift the 100 % check requirement for shrimps.

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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