SUMMARY RECORD OF THE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 21-22 JUNE 2005
(Section Biological Safety of the Food Chain)
(Section Controls and Import Conditions)

President: Eric Poudelet: points 3, 3b to 8, 11 to 13
Willem Daelman: points 9 to 10a
Michael Scannell: points 2 and 3a

All the Member States were present, except Poland.

1. Information on the state of play concerning the organisation of a Community training programme for 2005-2006 (Art. 51 of Regulation No (EC) 882/2004) (SM)

This point was removed from the agenda.

2. Russian import conditions for animals and products of animal origin. (RH)
(See point 2 of the 19 October 2004, 18 January, 16 February, 16 March, 21 April and 24 May 2005 SCFCAHs and point 3 of the 17 December 2004 SCFCAH)

Russia has announced some restrictions on imports pig meat products from Italy due to the outbreak of low pathogenic avian influenza. The Russian CVO’s letter of 8 June 2005 was distributed in this respect. Otherwise exports of animal products to Russia go smoothly in general and discussions are constructive. In the case of plant products, Russia insists on the Member States meeting the deadline of 1 July 2005 for submission of a single plant health certificate.

In Geneva, on this same day, discussions are being held on Russia’s WTO accession negotiations. The Commission renews its insistence on Russia’s full compliance with the SPS agreement of the WTO. Russia is by the same token requested to reconsider its disproportionate animal health provisions.

3. Summary of data provided by the Member States, Norway and stakeholders in May 2005 concerning impacts of the draft Commission Regulation on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (Document SANCO/4198/2001) (MH)

After the SCFCAH of 21 April 2005, the Member States (MS) and 4 European associations were asked to provide the Commission with a set of data from 2004 on the number of batches of minced meat and meat preparations tested for salmonella, the number of positive sample units in each positive batch, the number of
withdrawn batches, the number of salmonella outbreaks in humans, the number of those outbreaks linked to minced meat and meat preparations, the implementation of the current criteria (Directive 94/65), the economic and health impact of either of the criteria $c=0$ or $c=1$. The MS are evenly divided between these 2 criteria. Through its enquiry the Commission was looking for more elements to determine the direction to take. The results of this enquiry were presented to the MS. They show among other things that the prevalence of salmonella in minced meat was generally rather low, that strict salmonella control has resulted in a very low number of human domestic salmonellosis cases (in Sweden) and proves to be cost-effective (in Finland). As for the economic consequences for industry, they depend particularly on the batch prevalence as well as and on the batch sizes used by industry.

3a Imports of live bivalve molluscs from New Zealand (WMM)

Under the Veterinary Agreement, it was agreed that the sanitary rules, controls and certification of New Zealand are fully equivalent to Community requirements. The Commission informed the Member States that it will now present a draft Decision to include New Zealand in list I of the Annex to Commission Decision 97/20 and also define a list of authorised establishments for the imports of live bivalve molluscs from New Zealand.

3b EFSA request for TRACES data in the framework of its mandate on Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Import Risk Assessment (DC)

As agreed during the meeting held on 8 June 2005, the Member States (MS) were consulted on the request from the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) in its letter dated 19 May 2005 to be provided with TRACES data. The Netherlands approved of the Commission first consulting the MS before transmitting data to EFSA. Germany asked whether data would be sent directly to EFSA or only after every MS has given its opinion. The Commission committed itself to consult MS for every specific data request but once all MS agree on the providing of such data, the information from TRACES would be sent directly to EFSA, with a copy to MS.

4. Exchange of views and possible opinion of the Committee on a draft Commission Decision prohibiting the placing on the market of products derived from bovine animals born or reared within the United Kingdom before 1 August 1996 for any purpose and exempting such animals from certain control and eradication measures laid down in Regulation (EC) No 999/2001. (Document SANCO/538/2005) (Legal basis: Regulation (EC) No 999/2001) (Right of scrutiny of the European Parliament) (KVD) (See point 26 of 21 April 2005 SCFCAH)

The UK delegation gave an update of the latest data on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) surveillance since October 2004. For cattle born after the 1 August 1996 in the UK, the number of BSE cases decreases year on year and the BSE risk to consumers is now in line with many other Member States, which allows
the over-thirty-months (OTM) rule to be replaced by the pre-1996 rule. This domestic change will take place only when the testing system of OTM cattle has proven in compliance with all Community requirements. The Food Standard Agency has appointed an independent experts group to assess and report on the testing preparations and trials being carried out. Abattoirs must submit and follow a required method of operation of slaughtering OTM animals requiring sampling. At the time the change of rule occurs, controls of imports of OTM cattle from other Member States will also be lifted. A removal program of the pre-1996 cattle population amounting to about 700,000 animals will be put in place so as to avoid damages to national herds.

The UK delegation further asked the following statement to be mentioned in the minutes of the meeting:

‘Surveillance for BSE in the UK has established the different BSE risk presented by cattle born or reared in the UK before 1 August 1996 and those borne on or after that date. The UK operates active surveillance for BSE which is fully in line with Regulation (EC) No 999/2001. In addition, the UK delegation officially declares that in the United Kingdom all bovines aged between 30 and 42 months which are purchased for destruction pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 716/96 have to be tested for BSE according to national instruction.’

The purpose of this proposal is to provide for Scotland and Wales the necessary EU legal provision to allow them to adopt the pre-1996 rule, as well as to grant derogations to hides and milk and milk-based products deriving from pre-1996 animals.

**Vote:** 294 votes in favour


Annex IV to Regulation (EC) 999/2001 provides derogations for the prohibition of certain animal proteins in the feeding of farmed animals in order to prevent the dissemination of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) to animals. The Commission distributed a non-paper to the Member States giving information on the risk assessment following the detection of bone spicules in tuber and rood crops (Point II.A.(d) in the proposed amendment of Annex IV to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001). The European Food Safety Agency is expected to give its opinion on the risk assessment in July 2005. The Commission assured the Member States that this proposal will undergo further in depth discussions once the EFSA opinion is available. The aim of a positive vote today is to ensure its applicability before the forthcoming harvest of beetroots in September.

**Vote:** 255 votes in favour, 39 abstentions
6. **Exchange of views and possible opinion on a draft Commission Regulation on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (Document SANCO/4198/2001, Rev. 17)**


The Commission explained to the Member States (MS) the decision taken to present them a draft Regulation which includes a strict salmonella criterion \((c=0)\) for minced meat, meat preparations and meat products intended to be eaten cooked (document SANCO/4198/2001, Rev. 17a) and requested them to reflect and to eventually vote on that basis. Discussions followed by several indicative votes showed that no qualified majority could be reached on that proposal. The Commission decided to submit for approval of the committee an alternative version of the proposal (document SANCO/4198/2001, Rev. 17b) which grants a national transitional derogation for the salmonella criterion \(c=1\). This criterion applies until 31 December 2009 only on the national territories of MS adopting it whereas intra-Community trade has to be conducted according to the norm \(c=0\).

A great number of MS requested that a special mark distinguishable from the identification mark be specified in the proposal. The Commission made the appropriate amendment to the proposal.

The Spanish delegation wished to see their request recorded in the minutes of this meeting that the setting of a salmonella criterion for eggs be discussed and agreed upon as a priority at a later stage.

At the request of 6 MS, the Commission made the following declaration:

‘The Commission undertakes, in light of new epidemiological data to be supplied by the Member States, to consult EFSA before 31 December 2008, and request a quantitative risk assessment in relation to Salmonella in minced meat, meat preparations and meat products.’

The Danish delegation read out a ‘Statement on the proposal for a regulation on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (doc. SANCO/4198/2001 Rev. 17b)’, which they wished to be recorded in the protocol of the meeting:

‘Denmark support the efforts by the Commission to develop the community legislation on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs, which is of high priority for the Danish government in respect of improving the level of protection of the consumers. National legislation on microbiological criteria has been implemented in Denmark for many years, based on Risk Analysis principles.

In this context the Danish Food and Veterinary Research Institute has carried out a national risk assessment of the multiresistant type Salmonella Typhimurium DT 104 (MRDT 104) and as a consequence thereof Denmark has established national legislation on tolerance levels for the presence of the multiresistant Salmonella Typhimurium DT 104 (MRDT 104) in food. This legislation has been notified to the Commission at the time of implementation.'
During the negotiations of the community regulation the Commission has at several occasions, with the reference to Hygiene I, article 17.3, ensured the Danish delegation that such notified national legislation is not going to be affected by the decision on the proposal for a regulation on microbiological criteria. In the view of the Commission the present community criteria is to be seen as a step in a further development of community legislation in the field of microbiology.

Denmark support this stepwise development, and look forward to contributing to the proceeding steps based on risk assessments from EFSA on all aspects of relevance to maintaining the high level of consumer protection.

Emphasising the Commission declarations that the notified legislation is not affected by the present decision, Denmark votes in favour of the Commission Regulation on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs (doc. SANCO/4198/2001 Rev. 17b).

Vote: 257 votes in favour (Poland represented by the Slovak Republic), 42 votes against, 22 abstentions


This proposal lays down certain implementing measures with regard to the requirements concerning hygiene rules for food of animal origin under Regulation (EC) No 853/2004; it sets down certain rules and further requirements with regard to the specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption under Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, and with regard to official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules under Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 establishing at Community level a harmonised framework of general rules for the organisation of such controls. The proposal lays down transitional arrangements which will apply until 31.12.2009; it grants derogation for foods with traditional characteristics; and it brings amendments to the annexes of Regulation No 852/2004 laying down general rules on the hygiene of foodstuffs, Regulations No 853/2004 and 854/2004. Member States gave their views and comments, on which the Commission will reflect before bringing any appropriate amendments and presenting a revised version for technical vote at the SCFCAH of 19-20 July 2005.

Finland and Sweden have been granted additional salmonella guarantees at the time of their accession in 1995. Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 establishes new rules concerning special guarantees for food in respect of salmonella as from 1 January 2006. In this proposal, the Commission gathers and revises all the existing provisions into one new single Commission Regulation, where, among other things, more specific rules are laid down for the sampling of minced meat, and now cover minced meat from poultry. In addition, the Commission has drawn up a commercial document model for transportation to Finland and Sweden of meat from bovine or porcine animals and meat from poultry, including minced meat. The Commission intends to present this proposal for vote at the next SCFCAH on 19-20 July 2005.


The discussion of these documents was postponed possibly to a working group.


Since the adoption of the new rules on the hygiene of foodstuffs (Regulations (EC) No 852/2004, 853/2004, 854/2004) and of the rules on official controls (Regulation (EC) No 882/2004), the Commission has been requested to clarify a number of aspects related to food imports covered by these regulations. This document is directed at competent authorities and food businesses in the Member States (MS) and in third countries, in particular developing countries. It aims at giving general guidance on the implementation of the new food hygiene import requirements and will be presented at a meeting with third countries on 19 July 2005. At the request of some MS, the Commission will try to organise another working group in order to discuss the document further. The Commission asked MS to make and/or send their comments in good time in order to be able re-present the document for general consensus at the SCFCAH of 5 July 2005, Animal Health and Animal Welfare section.

10a Exchange of views and possibly reaching of a general consensus of the committee on the Commission guidance documents on HACCP (Documents SANCO/1515/2005 and SANCO/2655/2004 Rev. 7) (WD and RD)

These documents are directed at food businesses and competent authorities and are intended to give guidance on the flexibility with regard to the implementation of the
procedures based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-system, as a result of the adoption of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs. They explain HACCP principles and give guidelines for their application. The format in which these documents will be finalised has to be determined (guidance document or Commission Decision). The Commission agreed to the advice from some delegations to merge both documents into a single one. Member States expressed their general satisfaction with the drafts and were asked to send any further comments as soon as possible.


The objective of the survey, as outlined in the draft decision, is to estimate the prevalence of Salmonella spp. in flocks of broiler chickens within the Member States. The baseline survey will be carried out in order to collect comparable data and to provide the technical information necessary for the development of Community veterinary legislation. A Community financial assistance is foreseen to reimburse 100% of the costs incurred for the laboratory testing, up to a maximum amount per test. The Commission intends to present this proposal for vote at the next SCFCAH on 19-20 July 2005. The results of the survey will be used to establish a Community target for reducing the prevalence of salmonella in this animal population. The technical specifications are established in a working document (point 12 of the agenda).


This document is linked to the draft Decision on the baseline survey on salmonella in broilers (working document SANCO/1689/2005). It defines the technical specifications of the survey which will cover a one year period starting 1 October 2005.

13. Follow-up of Salmonella Enteritidis non/phage type 4 infection in England and Wales (SI)

The Commission distributed a summary of the events on Salmonella Enteritidis non/phage type 4 infection in England and Wales since the announcement in October 2004 by the UK authorities of a link between salmonella outbreaks in the UK and the consumption of Spanish eggs. Epidemiological and microbiological investigations carried out by the UK authorities on the reported outbreaks of food related gastrointestinal diseases concluded that they could mainly be traced back to Chinese restaurants and other catering facilities and possibly linked to Spanish eggs. The Spanish authorities confirmed that one UK outbreak was clearly linked to Spanish eggs and referred to a national action plan to control salmonella.
14. Miscellaneous / Divers

- Clarification was given by the Commission on the provision of Annex XI related to the trade of carcases and half-carasses and carasses cut into no more than three wholesale cuts still containing vertebral column. The Commission clarified that the wording ‘wholesale cuts’ refers to pieces of meat which are not for direct sale to the final consumer but should pass a cutting plant or a butcher shop where the vertebral columns must be removed. The trade of meat in portions for direct sale still containing the vertebral is not covered by this derogation and is not allowed. (KVD)

- The Austrian delegation informed the committee of the discovery of the 2nd case of bovine spongiform encephalopathies (BSE) in their country. The 1st case of BSE was in 2001. Detailed epidemiological information will be sent to the Commission.

- The Commission asked Member States to provide all available information on analyses carried out on samples seized in Italy, France, Belgium and Germany in the context of the fraudulent butter case of 1999. (XP)