

**ANIMAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Working Group of the Advisory Group on the Food Chain,  
Animal Health and Plant Health**

**MONDAY 9 MARCH 2015, 10.00 H – 18.00 H**

**Conference Centre Albert Borschette – Rue Froissart 36 – Bruxelles, CCAB-1D**

**SUMMARY**

*Note: the summary below covers discussions after and beyond the presentations which are already available embedded into the online agenda:*

[https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/comm\\_ahac\\_20150309\\_agenda.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/comm_ahac_20150309_agenda.pdf)

**Morning session 10:00-13:00**

**Introduction, opening: A. Laddomada Head of Unit G2 Animal Health - DG SANTE**

**1. TAIEX workshop in Lebanon to improve welfare practices at the time of slaughter, SANTE G3**

The Commission provided information on the multi-beneficiary TAIEX Workshop to improve welfare practices at the time of slaughter which was held in Lebanon on 9-10 March 2015. This workshop was initiated in response to the evidence of serious failings in animal welfare at the time of slaughter being experienced by EU cattle exported to the Middle East. This evidence was provided by a number of NGOs and supported by export data from Member States. DG SANTE worked in collaboration with DG NEAR to initiate the workshop with the support and input from the OIE, whose international standards and guidelines on welfare at slaughter should be being complied with by these countries. Expert speakers from Spain and Germany would present examples of best practice from the EU but the emphasis would be on regional speakers nominated by the OIE to share their experiences of compliance with OIE standards and guidelines. Participants from Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Algeria attended the workshop. The Commission stressed that this was the first step towards tackling this serious and complicated issue but hoped that this event would prompt further action in the region.

EUROGROUP welcomed the Commission's initiative but stressed concern that this coincided with an increase of live exports from the EU which resulted in more animals being slaughtered in extremely bad conditions. It was their opinion that one TAIEX workshop would not be enough to solve this issue and they requested to know whether the Commission was considering more action such as banning live exports, holding more workshops or pursuing bilateral agreements with these countries? The Commission reiterated that since this was the first step, it would need to await the results from the workshop before taking a decision on next steps.

ATA asked whether the workshop would also be addressing the transportation of these animals. The Commission confirmed that the workshop was focused on slaughter practices but would include an element of unloading.

UECBV said they had also been contacted by NGOs on this issue, expressed their support for the Commission's workshop and stated their hope that other workshops to tackle animal transportation outside the EU would take place.

FVE also expressed their support for this workshop and requested that any conclusions or results from it would be shared with this group. The Commission agreed to share the outcomes from the workshop.

## **2. Implementation of the Pet Regulation, SANCO G2**

After the presentation the Chairman reiterated again in general terms how much effort the Commission is putting into the fine-tuning and simplification of this Regulation, while adhering to its objectives of high level protection from e.g. rabies and ensuring its correct implementation. He as well highlighted the severe consequences (public health and also economic) of imported rabies cases, by referring to a study France made on that.

FVE appreciated the presentation and thanked the Commission for the whole initiative and its help in compiling and translating a Question and answer document which is available in many languages now on its website.

ATA appreciated the new rules but reiterated that the flexibility given for the separation of movement of pets and their owners is limited and requested to be made longer, at least 4 months. Also mentioned problems with pets which fall back onto trade rules for some reasons (registration of “establishments” of origin in third countries), the third remark concerned the list of third countries which is narrower for trade purposes than for pets and finally on posters he commented that those should be put on in countries of origin and not only in EU entry points and offered ATA’s help with partner airlines.

FESASS appreciated the efforts and supported ATA on the need to raise awareness in third countries and also inquired about the consistency between current pet rules and future ones under the Animal Health Law. The chairman immediately clarified this later and confirmed the need and Commission’s intention to be fully coherent, subject to agreement by Parliament and Council. As regards the info to public the COMM clarified that websites must also be set up, BTSF training is also exploring best practices, some make videos which also help. But in the end all takes a lot of efforts. As regards the time period its background was explained. Commission also encouraged participants to note the variety of flanking mechanisms, such as BTSF training and translation of Q and A docs, available (or can be made available by Commission) for the full implementation of any new rule and asked the participants to do their share to make outputs widely available and ensure compliance within their sphere of influence.

## **3. CALLISTO, an FP7 research project, FVE**

After the presentation the Commission appreciated the project.

FESASS commented on the role of worker’ dogs (e.g. those of animal transporters) which come into contact with livestock and the need to identify and register those. FVE emphasised the need of responsible ownership and good biosecurity practices from both the transporters and the livestock keepers. The Commission argued that based on contingency planning BTSF workshop most member state officials consider that such contacts between livestock and foreign animals should not occur.

FVE also mentioned in addition the upcoming conference they organise on stray dogs in Romania and their One Health conference on preparedness for natural disasters. The chairman emphasised on pets the need to demonstrate clear added value by any stakeholders for any future suggestions, otherwise Commission cannot act, despite of pressures.

## **4. EFSA scientific opinions, EFSA**

- on lumpy skin disease

- on peste des petits ruminants (PPR)

After the presentations FVE asked about the reasons for lack of vaccines.

FESASS worried about the spreading of these diseases into the EU and asked about the economic costs for such impacts. EFSA denounced questions as outside of its mandate.

OIE highlighted its global conference on PPR soon, and clarified its objectives i.e. to focus on possible global eradication in 15 years, including also costs (ca. 9 billion USD) and also offered a presentation on its outcomes at the next meeting.

The Commission summarised that situation in neighbouring countries is of concern and emphasised the value of these EFSA opinion for risk management. Control of these would be based on Directive 92/119/EEC should they occur.

One participant inquired about the tackling of illegal imports similar way as USA does with forms and declarations by passengers. Commission explained that it was explored several times with member states (MS) but always deemed by them as too burdensome, explaining also that all checks are the responsibility of the MS. In the future animal health law there will be more flexibility and more robust legal basis to tackle emerging diseases.

#### **5. State of play of new alternative methods for disposal of animal by-products: hatchery waste and colostrum, SANTE G2**

In addition to the title, the Commission also updated the participants that the consultation for the future question and answer document has been finished, appreciated many comments and suggestion received from the participants of this forum and indicated that the document will be on SANTE site soon, after endorsement by MS.

As regards alternative methods, he shared that for the producing of safe colostrum mandate for risk assessment has been accepted by EFSA, the procedure will run for 6 months counting from January, and their opinion is expected by July 2015. As regards assessment of a method to handle hatchery waste (“dead in shell”, Category 2 material), to be used for either biogas or compost production, EFSA also accepted the case but is still fine-tuning the Terms of reference, therefor the results are expected later, around September.

### **Afternoon session 14:30-18:00**

#### **Chair: Francisco Reviriego Unit G2 Animal Health - DG SANTE**

#### **6. TTIP as regards animal health and animal welfare, SANCO G7**

The Commission explained that there has been 8 rounds on the sanitary and phytosanitary chapter of the TTIP Agreement. The negotiations are based on the current bilateral agreement with the USA bringing in all the experiences gained. EU position has been presented in round 8 and it is available on website (link circulated with the agenda). US position is limited by their restrictions therefore limited info can be shared only. Regionalisation and equivalence is part of both texts but ideas (also basic viewpoints) are often different and the next step will be to consolidate the 2 texts into one from 9 round on (April, Washington). Commission is willing to share as much info as possible.

EUROGROUP as regards animal welfare standards it seems that those are very different in the US. How can those be consolidated if the difference is so big? Are we going to water down EU AW standards which are ahead of those of US? The Commission explained that lowering of standards is our of question as also explained many times by many EU actors. EU

position reaffirms that animals are sentient beings and alignments should be towards ours rather than. TTIP is a good opportunity to harmonise other (US and beyond) TC standards closer to ours, while our standards cannot be imposed on TC either.

AVEC commented that since standards (not only AW but also on use of substances, veterinary medicines etc.) cannot be imposed to other, but in the end they must be accepted for trade, this may harm EU farming community therefore Commission must be strict on those. Also asked about transparency from USA, i.e. when it is to be expected?

EAZA inquired about the harmonisation for zoo animals where the two set of rules and philosophy are closer. Commission reiterated that is aware of many of these issues and fights both for market access and defending EU producers but remained prudent on as to when US or consolidated documents will be public.

FESASS asked about TBT chapter as some animal health and welfare requirements belong there. The Commission declined any speculation on that.

## **7. Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea (PED), SANCO G2**

Before the EFSA presentation the Commission briefly summarised some of the key elements drivers and ramifications relevant for PED, including the lack of EU legal rules and compared the need to gather more data to that done for the Schmallenberg disease earlier, explaining the current mandate for EFSA for technical assistance mainly related to collection of data.

## **8. Update on highly pathogenic avian influenza in the EU, SANCO G2, (taken in the morning)**

After the presentation the Rural Poultry Association mentioned the necessity of various biosecurity measures suited to various keeping systems, not only indoor keeping of poultry, and that furthermore the link between wild birds and poultry should be further explored, also by research, including into the breed of the animals as some of them may be more resistant to AI virus.

EUROGROUP emphasises the need to respect the welfare need of animals destroyed in third countries such as Taiwan and observe in particular the OIE international rules in this regard and considered that EU should do more in third countries in this regard.

COPA-COGECA mentioned that scientific gaps still exist between biosecurity measures and their efficacy to prevent outbreaks. Also mentioned that they often have direct and significant costs while their return is less clear. Hence they must be limited to those which do not endanger the viability of production.

AVEC also commented on a number of knowledge gaps existing despite of EFSA works and pointed out that recent outbreaks seem to be in flock of animals of higher age, such as layers and fattening turkey but not in broilers. As regards members state (MS) measures he considered that the Netherlands is well prepared but also has introduced more strict measures than other MS and their efficacy cannot be demonstrated as MS with less strict (standard EU ) measures were also successful in handling outbreaks. AVEC would prefer more harmonised EU measures especially that trading partners (third countries) sometimes differentiate between MS for their import restrictions and that concerns the poultry sector. He also mentioned upcoming international meetings including on compartmentalisation in third countries.

The Commission reiterated that we should not be surprised at anything AI throws at us. Commission also argued for the broad right of MS to tailor-make their national strategies and measures. In all he considered that despite of the measures, outbreaks cost much more and

better to be too stringent than the opposite. As regards compartmentalisation he agreed with the concerns but also mentioned that the future animal health law will provide more room for the compartments as one more possible tool in the relevant tool box. Finally, Commission again spoke for the need to be science based and again defended subsidiarity.

## **9. Any other business**

- **Conference on Wildlife on 5 May, SANCO G2, (*taken in the morning*)**

The Commission briefly explained the scope and objectives of the planned conference as well as other details about it and invited participants to register to and attend it.

EFRA inquired if African swine fever will be covered and Commission confirmed that yes but also made clear that its position on that is already very clear and the Conference will have a much wider focus than ASF.

FESASS welcomed it and added its concerns on the role of wildlife for spread of tuberculosis. It is important to keep good biosecurity to prevent cross-contamination between wild and livestock. Commission confirmed that the topic will be duly covered.