

Citizens' summary

EU proposal for revision of the provisions on official controls along the food chain

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

- In order to ensure EU citizens have the safest and highest quality food a set of harmonised Union rules have been established to prevent, eliminate or reduce the level of risk to humans, as well as animals and plants, along the agri-food chain. That food business operators are abiding by the rules is determined by official controls undertaken by the national administrations.
- However, experience and evidence shows that in many cases official controls are not being operated in the most effective and efficient way, and in some cases are failing to fulfil their purpose.
- The proposal addresses shortcomings in the design of the legal framework which governs official controls (overlaps, gaps, inefficiencies), and the uncertainties as to the availability of a stable and steady influx of funds to sustain official control activities.

WHAT EXACTLY WOULD CHANGE?

The proposal will:

- Ensure a comprehensive and consistent approach to official controls along the agri-food chain, to plant health, plant reproductive materials and to animal welfare, by eliminating fragmentations and inconsistencies of the current legal framework;
- Allow for a more efficient use of national control resources, by eliminating residual non risk-based mechanisms for their allocation;
- Reduce administrative burden and removes unnecessary requirements;
- Foster closer cooperation between MS to improve official control delivery;
- Give MS clear rules on how a 'high level of transparency' of official control results should be ensured so that the European citizens and operators can benefit from the same level of transparency across the EU. The same high level of transparency will apply with regard to the calculation and application of fees;
- Ensure the availability of adequate resources, and ensure equity and fairness in the financing of official controls through the recovery of all costs incurred to perform official controls from all registered food and feed operators as well as from operators subject to phytosanitary controls and controls on seeds.

WHO WOULD BENEFIT AND HOW?

- National administrations tasked with official controls and other official duties (public health, veterinary and phytosanitary monitoring and action) will benefit from improved and more effective enforcement tools.
- Operators (food and feed businesses, from primary producers to retailers and caterers, but also plant/animal breeders, growers and traders) will benefit from the increased efficiency of national competent authorities resulting from streamlining and simplification of the legislative framework and from the risk based operation of the administrations.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- The existence of common Union rules to govern the organisation and performance of official controls is necessary to ensure that food chain rules are implemented in a uniform way and that the internal market functions smoothly. Without common rules, it is very unlikely that this would happen.
- As the problems identified in the current rules are linked to their design, these problems cannot be overcome by MS alone, and action is required by the EU as a whole.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

This Commission proposal has to go through the EU Council of Ministers and the European Parliament before becoming law and it is anticipated to come into effect in or after 2015.

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