EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Relations with agencies and advisory groups

PLENARY MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH

30 APRIL 2015

Summary Record

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The Chair opened the meeting on behalf of COM and welcomed participants. He presented the agenda which was then adopted.

2. STATE OF PLAY ON THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON CRITERIA TO IDENTIFY ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS

COM gave a short update on latest developments regarding the impact assessment (IA) on criteria to identify endocrine disruptors, informed participants on ongoing round table meetings with stakeholders, Member States (MS) and members of the European Parliament and highlighted that all relevant information is available on dedicated DG SANTE website (http://ec.europa.eu/health/endocrine_disruptors/policy/index_en.htm).

COM then briefly summarised the existing EU legislation already addressing the endocrine disruptors. The European strategy on endocrine disruptors was adopted in 1999. Specific provisions were introduced in the EU chemical legislation during the last years, namely in Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), plant protection products (PPP), biocides (BP) and cosmetic regulations.

COM explained that the task to propose scientific criteria to identify endocrine disruptors, requested in the PPP and BP legislation, is a very complex with different implications on different regulatory frameworks. Thus, following the general COM line for decisions which might have significant impacts on several areas of society, a formal impact assessment is currently carried out.

The impact assessment will be carried out, as usual, with a broad scope covering *inter alia* public health, environment, agriculture, trade, effects on industry, SMEs, administrative burden, etc.

COM further gave an update on work already done. The road map defining a broad range of options for the scientific criteria and regulatory decision making was published in June 2014. A public consultation via an online survey was carried on between September 2014 and January 2015. Most of the received responses are published on the website mentioned above. The responses are being analysed. At the later stage a report will be published.

COM explained that there are two sets of studies foreseen; the first study will focus on identifying which chemical substances would fall under each of the options as defined in a road map. For this a screening method based on existing evidence was developed by Joint Research Centre (JRC), and a screening of 700 chemical substances using this method will be carried out by an external contractor.

The second set of studies will focus on assessing the various impacts.

COM concluded informing on the conference on endocrine disruptors scheduled for 1 June to which stakeholders can already register via the website mentioned above.

Comments and questions raised

EUROGROUP for Animals asked whether animal wellbeing is taken into account in the impact assessment.

Regarding the tests for endocrine disruptors EUROGROUP for Animals stressed the importance of using alternative methods of testing before testing on animals.

EUROGROUP for Animals pointed out that there is no mentioning of animal welfare on the agenda of the conference scheduled for 1 June.

COM confirmed that animal testing will be assessed and in vitro tests are considered as evidence.

Regarding the conference agenda it will be considered if a point on animal welfare could be formally added. If it is not possible due to time constraints, it could be addressed during discussion.

On the FVE question whether the impact assessment will look at the effect of endocrine disruptors on animals for food producing and wild animals and whether the human and veterinary medicines are excluded COM confirmed that effects on wildlife will be considered and pharmaceuticals are excluded.

COPA-COGECA asked whether the impact assessment will only focus on endocrine disruptors or will be linked to the general framework of loss of substances.

COM replied that IA will also assess the consequences in case of ban of some active substances and would look what might be the alternatives.

UEAPME asked how many out of 700 substances are in food, feed and cosmetics.

COM explained that the biggest part is formed by approved substances in plant protection products, biocides, about 100-200 substances falling under REACH and cosmetics. IA itself will focus on the ones in PPP and biocides.

On the FRESHFEL request to have access to the list of targeted substances COM confirmed that the list of all the active substances approved as well as non-approved is available on SANTE website.

3. UPDATE ON THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP (TTIP)

COM gave a short overview on negotiation rounds where DG SANTE leads the negotiations on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS). The main task is to agree an SPS chapter, which will provide for certainty in the future in EU-US SPS relations.

COM explained that there have been 9 rounds of negotiations. Until round 6 it was more an exchange of ideas of what should be in the chapter. COM pointed out that it did not start from scratch, that there is a veterinary agreement already existing (since 1988) so these negotiations aim at building on its success. However, this existing agreement is only binding for the EU but not for the US. TTIP will be binding for both sides.

EU would like to bring plant health as well as animal welfare that are not covered by the existing agreement to the chapter.

During round 7 EU SPS draft chapter was presented and questions taken, in round 8 US presented their chapter, followed by exchange of written questions before round 9. Round 9 focused on answering the questions.

The next round is scheduled for July in Brussels during which work will commence on consolidating the text.

COM informed participants that on DG TRADE website all information is available to public.

COM stressed that the EU priorities are mainly for the EU to be recognised by the US as a single entity in trade; clarify import conditions into the US since their procedures are very lengthy and complex (especially on plants); include provisions on animal welfare into a SPS chapter, ensure smoother recognition of regionalisation or zoning.

In parallel to the work on the chapter COM continues negotiating with the US on individual trade issues, e.g. access of EU beef to the US.

Comments and questions raised

On PAN EUROPE question on pesticides levels in products from US (EU legislation in this respect is stricter than in US) COM replied that there is no plan to change the standards on pesticides.

BEUC mentioned fast track bill presented in US Congress regarding TTIP. There are some demands that it is important to get rid of barriers and labelling of products with GMO was mentioned. According to COM this topic is not on the table. Regarding transparency reciprocity from the US is needed.

COM underlined that no lowering of safety standards or public health risk are negotiated neither changes to EU basic legislation.

COM confirmed that there is a lot of input on both sides, all comments and suggestions will be analysed but for the moment basic legislation is not discussed, so no discussion on labelling.

COM confirmed that access to the text should be easier once consolidated chapter is ready.

CEFIC asked on rules on specified risk materials (SRM) removal, since there are differences in requirements, thus, mutual recognition would be needed.

COM replied that during the last round specific problems should be discussed, how to find balance in different issues and the mentioned problem would fit into this framework.

AVEC stressed the importance to defend farm to fork approach. It suggested that poultry sector should be considered as a sensitive one in terms of tariffs.

COM replied that the question is more for DG AGRI.

EUROGROUP for Animals asked on chapter on animal welfare and how EU wants to find an agreement, since EU applies the stringent animal welfare standards but some US states are 50 years behind.

COM agreed that there are indeed differences on animal welfare. EU wants an article on animal welfare within the SPS chapter. US does not see it as SPS issue, agrees to put some provisions elsewhere. COM insists that animal welfare should be in SPS chapter but it will have to be drafted carefully in a way not to push but to encourage US to increase standards in animal welfare.

On EHPM question whether food supplements are to be discussed COM replied that it is not the case.

4. STATE OF PLAY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF COUNCIL REGULATION NO1099/2009

COM/FVO (Food and Veterinary Office) shortly informed about series of audits to 13 MS to evaluate the effectiveness of the official control systems on business operators to ensure animals are spared any avoidable pain, distress, or suffering during their killing and related operations. The audits were carried on via the meetings with competent authorities on central, regional and local level and visits in slaughterhouses. The audits covered powers of competent authorities, checking how planning and performance of competent authorities is done. In the Regulation most of the responsibilities were shifted to business operators themselves. Audit checked their compliance with the general requirements, as well as the additional requirements for slaughterhouses.

Regarding the requirements for business operators the finding showed problems concerning manufacturer's instructions for the use of restraining and stunning equipment, electrical (waterbath) stunning of chickens, monitoring of stunning and standard operating procedures (SOPs).

COM further explained that concerning enforcement corrective action was generally obtained without the need to apply penalties and serious or longstanding issues generally resulted in initiation of administrative/legal procedures.

COM summarised that Reg. 1099/2009 mostly implemented from an operational point of view with work still to be done concerning: the business operators systems of ensuring and demonstrating compliance; and the official controls for auditing those operators instead of exclusively inspecting their operations. Enforcement generally achieved results when action was requested but such action was not being requested in many MS with regard to waterbath stunning of chickens.


4 FVO
Implementation 1099.

Comments and questions raised:

EUROGROUP for Animals asked why the audit was carried on only in 13 MS and not in all. It expressed serious concerns regarding not correct stunning, not correct monitoring and a little progress made in implementing the legislation.

It raised questions why doing the audits only from 2013 when legislation on laying hens in enriched cages and group housing of sows was so late in implementing.

EUROGROUP for Animals has been informed that no infringement procedures would be taken based on Reg. 1099/2009 for at least 3 years, it asked why, particularly considering the non-compliances identified with waterbath stunning and corresponding lack of enforcement.

EUROGROUP for Animals asked how slaughterhouses can respect the 100% monitoring and not releasing from restraint prior to loss of consciousness when doing ritual slaughter considering that this causes major slowing down in line speeds.

EUROGROUP for Animals asked how the control is carried on in slaughterhouses in non EU members importing to the EU.

COM explained that this is just the first round of inspections to see status with these initial 13 MS and then overview report to inform and discuss and decide afterwards if/when to audit more MS.

COM replied that laying hens and group housing implied structural changes while Reg. 1099/2009 concerns mainly a shift in responsibilities so there was no reason to audit that before it was mandatory for it to be implemented.

COM admitted that as stated in the report there are some issues in correct monitoring as well as in not sufficient description of procedures done by business operators.

COM stated that slaughterhouses had gaps in their procedures but when complete they did respect ritual slaughter requirements and some have split restraint for ritual slaughter so that normal and ritual restraint can both feed the same processing line and together maintain the economically desired line speed.

Regarding the import from non EU members COM informed participants that Animal welfare group did a series of audits to 3rd countries in 2011, before Reg. 1099/2009 came into force, and after that veterinary audits to 3rd countries were carried on on mammal and poultry meat by other FVO units evaluating and reporting on animal welfare as well.

EUROCOMMERCE asked whether the results of these series of audits are going to be incorporated into the new animal welfare framework and in the study on Information to Consumers and whether there are plans to use this to help out with improving the official controls.

COM stressed that there is a lot of effort made on correct implementation of animal welfare rules. There is no intention to frame a particular strategy on top of the existing

Regulation but the recommendations from these audits will be used when configuring animal welfare policy.

Regarding the study on Information to Consumers, it is almost ready to be published and it was drafted before the audits were finished so it will not include the results.

COM/FVO has a Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) planned for the end of 2015 intending to help the official controls in this area.

On FVE question on maintenance of equipment and unfit animals COM replied that maintenance in general was in order with few shortcomings usually related to documentation of such maintenance. Regarding unfit animals, it is still a problem mainly in countries that have not set up a system facilitating the acceptance at slaughterhouses of animals killed on farm.

5. HIGH PRESSURE PROCESSING AND OTHER NEW/EMERGING FOOD TECHNOLOGIES

COM shortly introduced new/emerging food technologies, among others pulsed electric field, ozone treatment, membrane filtration, UV liquid pasteurisation, ultrasounds, cold plasma, pulse and others. Further COM detailed what High Pressure Processing (HPP) is and how it works.

COM introduced the FVO project on HPP aiming at obtaining an overview of the use of HPP by the food industry in the EU, what are its benefits and implications; how MS would ensure that its use does not pose a food safety concern. Project methodology would include information gathering, questionnaire to MS competent authorities, consultation with stakeholders as well as fact finding missions.

COM then highlighted the importance of process validation and touched upon some of the areas to be considered in the validation process and few other data gathered in the first step of the project.

With regard to the questionnaire to competent authorities (CA), COM mentioned that it contained questions on HPP uses, the CAs approach in relation to HPP and the systems in place for ensuring that new/emerging food processing technologies which may affect food safety are adequately considered during official controls.

Questions to stakeholders would seek replies on purpose of use of HPP, including its benefits and implications, as well as extent of use per sector and users. Further questions would touch upon the process control, available guidance and good practices as well as on existing national rules, including labelling of products subject to HPP.

5 Advisory group HPP v4.pdf

Comments and questions raised

On a question by Chair on a provisional timing of questionnaire for stakeholders COM replied that it would be launched in May with a deadline for feedback in September or October.

Chair also pointed out that a questionnaire should not target only industry stakeholders.

FOODDRINK Europe commented that there are several key projects on HPP ongoing and a reference should be made to these projects outcomes.

COM confirmed that via CORDIS information on EU funded research projects on this issue is available. A reference to it is intended to be made in the overview report to be drafted at the end of the FVO project on HPP.

BEUC asked on any indication whether HPP is concerned as a novel food.

COM confirmed that it is a part of discussion since there is a certain touch with novel food aspects in existing rules.

6. STUDY ON "LABELLING PRODUCTS FROM CLONED ANIMALS AND THEIR OFFSPRING"

Firstly Chair gave a brief update on two proposals for Directives on cloning: "Cloning Technique Proposal" (i.e. EP and Council Directive on the cloning of animals of the bovine, porcine, ovine, caprine and equine species kept and reproduced for farming purposes) and "Cloning Food Proposal" (i.e. Council Directive on the placing on the market of food from animal clones) adopted by COM. The proposals are currently debated in the EP joint ENVI and AGRI committee.

ENVI/AGRI committee's rapporteurs fully agreed on banning the cloning technique and food from clones.

COM's view is that the proposals as they stand embrace diverse interests while respecting the legal framework within which the EU institutions must operate (including international commitments).

COM reminded that in 2013 the College did not endorse EP's request for rules on food from offspring/descendants of clones because it was not justifiable on the basis of food safety, animal welfare or internal market concerns. Treaties provide only limited powers to regulate on ethical concerns, not viable in proportionality terms since presumably complex and costly.

To verify this presumption in 2014 COM launched a study on the labelling of food from clones and their offspring.

COM explained that the mentioned study is currently running and the first results would be available at the end of the year. COM launched the study on its own initiative, thus, there is no obligation to formally present a report to the certain date. The results of the study will be published. It is not foreseen to have in addition an official COM report. COM highlighted that it is not a political study on ethical issues but a technical one looking at consequences that labelling of clone animals and their offsprings would have. The existing systems of pedigree recording of different species, identification and traceability systems developed and system of labelling will be used.

COM mentioned that some stakeholders might be contacted by the contractor in charge of the study.

Detailed information in relation to the tender and allocated contract is available on COM website.


6 cloning tender.pdf

Comments and questions raised

EUROGROUP for Animals did not agree with a statement in an update that descendants of clones do not represent any health risk. It also asked whether it will be contacted by a contractor regarding the study.

Chair referred to EFSA report where the distinction is made between clone animals and their descendants.

COM clarified that it depends on contractor which sources will be used.

BEUC asked what new elements the study would bring since there have been already elements on labelling from clone animals and offsprings in the road map of a proposal on cloning in 2012.

COM explained that there are many studies following a large political debate. This study is highly technical aiming at determining the impact on food chain, processors, farmers, consumers if food from clone animals and offsprings would be labelled. The study will also look at the definition of offspring, regarding the question till how many generations to go.

FESASS stated that it already has been contacted by a contractor. FESASS stressed that breeding industry is not keen on taking cloning technology up since there is no market for it in the EU. FESASS underlined that labelling of products from clone offspring is impossible with current tools and it would come at very high costs.

Chair concluded that the study will give more information on different pressing issues.

7. REVIEW OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON GMOS

COM gave an update on adoption of the COM communication (22 April) and legislative proposal to review the process for the authorisation of GMOs for food and feed. The proposal derives from the COM political guidance with the objective to give the majority view of national governments at least the same weight as the scientific advice in the authorisation of GMO on their territory.

COM explained that the outcome of the review is outlined in the COM communication which confirms the need to adapt the GMO legal framework in order to better reflect public views and give the national governments a greater say on the use of GMOs for food and feed.

COM underlined that current decision making process, in practice, has led to a situation – unique to GMOs – where systematically COM would approve GMO for food and feed when in committee MS were unable to reach a qualified majority against or in favour. Most of the time MS refusal or abstentions reflect national concerns not only related to risks on health and the environment. Presently MS can only use emergency measures in order to oppose the use of approved GMO. In case of cultivation a solution was found recently with adoption of Directive 2015/412 which allows MS to prohibit or restrict the cultivation of GMOs on their territory for reasons other than health and environmental risks.

COM proposes to extend this solution to food and feed and amend Regulation 1829/2003 on GMOs for food and feed to give MS the possibility to address at national level the elements which are not covered by the current decision making process. MS will get the possibility and legal tools to decide on the use for food and feed of EU authorised GMOs in their territory, based on reasons other than risks on health and environment which remain in the remit of EFSA.

COM stressed that MS will have to justify that their opt out decisions are motivated by overriding reasons of general interest and are in line with the rules of the Treaty regarding internal market as well as international obligations. The measures have to be communicated to COM and other MS in advance with 90 days available for comments.

COM informed participants that the discussion on COM proposal should start in European Parliament and Council in coming weeks.

Comments and questions raised

On question of SLOW FOOD whether there are any measures regarding the labelling of GMOs, COM replied that labelling is not part of the proposal, it only mentions that traces of authorised GMOs under the labelling threshold of 0,9% will be tolerated in MS that opted out from the use of GMOs on their territory.

FEFAC welcomed the authorisation of 19 GMOs on 24 April. Otherwise it expressed concern on behalf of feed sector that the legislative proposal would allow MS to undermine the internal market. FEFAC pointed out that vast majority of compound feed contain GMOs ingredients thus the proposal would have serious impact on the sector. FEFAC highlighted the fact that there was neither economic impact assessment carried on nor stakeholder consultation.

COM clarified that the commitment in the political guidelines was to address the national concerns of MS not related to science, which cannot be taken into account in the current authorisation system. There are many tools to deal with scientific issues during and after the authorisation process. EU risk assessment and authorisation remains at EU level.

CEFIC underlined the issue of internal market and how it can be respected. CEFIC expressed concern that this is a precedent that could be used in other fields, and jeopardise the internal market. CEFIC also pointed out that labelling provisions would be complex to implement and misleading for consumers.

COM recalled that the proposal is based on article 36 of the EU Treaty, which foresees that Internal Market rules can be superseded when MS invoke overriding reasons of public interest. On labelling COM recalled that operators already have to label products containing more than 0,9% of GMOs. COM explained that no impact assessment was performed as the proposal derives directly from the COM political guidelines and that the impacts will depend on whether and how the Member States will make use of the provisions of the proposal.

AVEC agreed with previous speakers and stressed that currently the European food chain (poultry production) is highly dependent on import of protein feed from third countries (where the cultivation of GM varieties is increasing and not all of them are approved in the EU). The situation will be further complicated if a number of MS will be able to ban the use of EU approved GMO’s to be used in feed and/or food. According to AVEC once

the proposal will be adopted and implemented by MS with a ban, it will distort the level playing field between EU producers in the different MS.

SLOW FOOD pointed out that EU has to safeguard the right of citizens for informed choices, so all labelling measures must be done with bearing this in mind.

On a question from EUROPABIO COM confirmed that for opting out MS must use grounds distinct from the elements already assessed by EFSA.

EUROCOMMERCE raised concern on issue of supply chain and traceability.

COPA-COGECA did not support COM proposal and stressed that the proposal would go against general food law, principles of internal market and better regulation.

FOODDRINK Europe asked why there were no studies and modelling exercises on the impact of the proposal on functioning of internal market carried on before taking the decision.

FEFAC pointed out that the proposal would open a Pandora box on labelling of animals fed with GMOs. FEFAC underlined that especially on feed labelling there is inconsistency between existing legislation and the new proposal. Regarding public concerns, according to FEFAC there is no rational behind this proposal as citizens' rights are already well protected by current legislation.

COM explained that labelling of animals fed with GMOs is not foreseen. COM noticed that some MS that usually vote against in regulatory committee are in the end users of GM in feed. The legislative proposal, which aims to give more capacity to MS to decide on the use of EU authorised GMOs in their territory, may trigger an interesting debate in this respect.

On EUROPABIO question on notifications of draft opt out measures, COM explained that the procedure is quite similar to the one in Directive 98/34, i.e. COM can make comments and observations which may not be taken into account by the Member State, but COM holds the capacity of launching an infringement procedure against the final measure if deemed against EU law.

On EHPM question concerning the study ordered by COM on GM free labels in the EU, COM replied that it will be published after completion of ongoing internal discussions as regards next steps on the matter.

8. UPDATE ON SANTE EVENTS IN EXPO MILAN

COM briefly reminded participants of the EXPO theme "Feeding the Planet. Energy for life" and stressed the main EU messages in EXPO, namely that the EU guarantees high food safety standards, promotes sustainable food systems, the food industry is the largest manufacturing sector and employer in the EU economy.

COM further gave a preview on 18 initiatives DG SANTE is organising that are grouped under three key topics: improving health and nutrition in Europe, ensuring the functioning of the internal market, promoting the long term sustainability of the food chain.

COM then presented the EU pavilion and DG SANTE events from the communication point of view with an engaging story focusing on wheat and bread as founding elements of European civilization.

COM informed participants that DG SANTE events will also be promoted on the DG SANTE website and in diverse social media, encouraging stakeholders to promote the relevant events to their members. Many of the events will also be web streamed to attract a wider public.


8
PresentationAdvisoryG

Comments and questions raised

On EUROCOMMERCE request COM clarified registration practicalities.

9. EVALUATION OF THE ACTION PLAN AGAINST THE RISING THREATS FROM ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

COM stressed that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) represents an increasing worldwide health concern for both humans and animals and summarised the latest facts and figures. COM underlined that resistant bacteria is a natural phenomenon but amplified by a variety of factors, namely inappropriate or over use of therapeutic antibiotics in human and veterinary medicine, poor hygiene and infection prevention measures in healthcare settings and at farm level, transmission of resistant bacteria from animals to humans through the food chain or direct contact, environmental spread caused by contaminated food and water systems and international trade and travel, lack of new effective antimicrobials or alternatives.

COM presented briefly the European Commission Strategy on AMR – a 5 year action plan stressing the holistic approach with 7 key areas and 12 concrete actions working in parallel in human and veterinary medicines.

COM then pointed out the existing EU legislation with regard to AMR such as Pharmaceutical legislation on medicinal products for human use (Directive 2001/83/EC) introducing the prescription-only requirement for the use of antibiotics in humans and animals, Harmonised monitoring and new case definitions for antimicrobial resistance and healthcare-associated infections (Decision 2013/1082/EU), Harmonised monitoring of AMR in zoonotic and commensal bacteria in the food chain (Decision 2013/652/EU), EU legislations on veterinary medicinal products and medicated feed (revision ongoing), Draft Animal Health Law.

COM informed participants that the Action Plan Progress Report on progress made so far on the 12 actions was published in March 2015 listing all scientific guidelines, reports and recommendations issued by ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, EFSA (European Food Safety Authority) and EMA (European Medicines Agency). The report also gives links to ongoing research projects.

COM stressed the commitment of the COM to evaluate the impact of the Action plan with the objectives to identify the achievements and failures in the implementation of the 12 key strategic actions (with the progress report as the basis document), to assess the

impact of the achievements on the management and control of AMR in the EU, to enable the COM to better identify what new or additional measures should be taken in the medium and long term strategy to combat AMR.

COM concluded with presenting the expected timeline of ex-post evaluation with finalisation of Evaluation Roadmap in May 2015, followed by Call for tender procedure in June 2015 and Final report is expected by December 2015/ January 2016. COM is looking beyond 2016 and plans to launch the follow up Action Plan II.

9 AMR Advisory Group.pdf

Comments and questions raised

On BEUC question when the Guidelines on prudent use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicines would be published COM replied that it will be published in June 2015, but first Inter-Service Consultation must be completed.

FVE asked for more information on call for tender, timetable seems to be very ambitious.

FEFAC asked on international cooperation with global partners and in which ways COM contributes to FAO programme to combat AMR.

FESASS commented that there exists not only transmission of resistant bacteria from animals to humans but also vice-versa but there is not much evidence. FESASS asked which tools and measures COM envisages in animal health law (AHL) to fight AMR.

COM admitted that the timetable for a tender is tight but the evaluation will only cover actions actually carried out.

On FESASS question COM commented that main point of interest in the AHL is prevention is better than cure.

COM stressed that international collaboration is very important, COM is involved in bilateral activities with the US, WHO, OIE and FAO. COM underlined that AHL will provide a legal basis for addressing AMR in non-zoonotic pathogens.

FESASS informed participants that it organises a conference on AMR on 23 October.

10. STATE OF PLAY ON FOOD HYGIENE ISSUES: OVERVIEW OF THE ONGOING DISCUSSIONS IN THIS AREA

COM gave a short summary of state of play on ongoing food hygiene issues and presented the Guide to good hygiene practice at primary production of food of non-animal origin.

COM briefly presented the proposal on hot recycled water used for the decontamination of carcasses at slaughterhouses. The proposal received a positive opinion from EFSA in 2010 confirming its safety and efficiency for all species. The method has been used in Denmark under a research project and ranked as the most-effective method to control

Salmonella in pigs. The proposal got a favourable opinion of MS. Its publication is expected in September 2015.

Regarding the maintenance of the cold chain during storage and transport of meat COM explained that it asked for EFSA Scientific Opinion on the public health risks related to the maintenance of the cold chain during storage and transport of meat (Part 1 -meat of domestic ungulates and Part 2 - minced meat from all species) in order to draft a new legislative proposal which would be an alternative to the existing Regulation allowing more flexibility with regard to storage conditions and transport of meat. COM explained that following discussion with MS and stakeholders new requests have been sent to EFSA seeking further information. Additional EFSA opinion should be available by October 2015.

On import of gelatine, collagen and certain highly defined products COM stressed that the main purpose of two draft Regulations would be to solve several outstanding problems, namely to bring together existing lists of third countries and certificates into one single act for reasons of consistency and clarity; to introduce new lists of third countries allowed to import certain products into the EU when there is an obligation for such listing but it is not done yet (collagen and highly refined products); to provide a single import certificate for animal health and public health attestation, while currently two separate certificates need to be used (raw materials for the production of collagen and gelatine); to introduce specific certificates for treated materials for the production of collagen and gelatine, and for certain highly refined products of animal origin, to avoid the current confusion on which certificate to use.

Regarding the current state of play COM presented a draft timeline with final technical discussion with MS in working group meeting of 19 May, technical agreement with MS in a standing committee meeting in May, final vote in September 2015.

COM presented Guide on good hygiene practices in food of non-animal origin (FNAO) at primary production giving the main milestones. EFSA provided opinions on different risks after prioritizing together with COM the food/pathogen combinations. Outcome of these EFSA opinions will be used in a Guide. Stakeholders are to be consulted in upcoming months, followed by discussion and validation by all MS in the 2nd half of 2015.

COM further mentioned FVO project on implementation of HACCP (Hazard analysis and critical control points) to be finalised soon as well as specific Advisory Group working group meeting to discuss food hygiene related issues scheduled for 28 May.

10 hygiene issues
Advisory forum 30 Apr

Comments and questions raised

On CEFIC question whether the definition of highly refined products will apply only to products mentioned or other products could be included COM replied that products for which the certificate rules apply are clearly defined but invited stakeholders to alert COM if other products should be included.

FEFAC asked clarification on the scope of the import certificates.

COM stressed that the scope of import certificates is purely for use in food. The purpose of the import must be known since for different purposes there are different documents needed.

On EUROCOMMERCE request for more information on HACCP project COM informed participants that the draft report will be finalised after the working group discussion with MS taking place in May.

11. SHORT INFORMATION ON POINTS RAISED BY STAKEHOLDERS

State of play on the VTEC (Verocytotoxigenic Escherichia coli) issue in the light of the replies to the EU Commission questionnaire

COM clarified that the questionnaire was linked to concerns raised by stakeholders that there was a different approach within MS when toxin producing e-coli was identified in meat. Therefore, COM started a discussion with MS to lay down guidance in order to assist MS. The draft guidance document was discussed during several working groups. In order to obtain a clear view of the MS's positions, a questionnaire was issued. The replies showed that majority of MS are of an opinion that the guidance document should cover all stages of the food chain not only retail. In a further discussion all MS supported a cautious approach when detecting toxin producing e-coli. On a question whether DG SANTE should continue working on the guidance document majority of MS replied positively.

11 STEC questionnaire 2014 (A

State of play on modernization of meat inspection in bovines

COM explained that internal discussion is ongoing. Tentative timetable would be to start a discussion on a draft Commission Regulation in 2016.

Comments and questions raised

On FVE question where we stand with food chain information (FCI) model COM replied that there is already a legal basis to provide FCI. What is proposed is to have a harmonised model, but for the moment no decision has been taken to put for a vote.

Project on slaughter hygiene

This project is mainly run by FVO motivated by FVO concerns while on inspections. The project is looking at good practices in slaughterhouses in MS, taking into account the projects run by stakeholder organisations in this field. The report scheduled for 2016 would then look at the ways on how best to learn and implement the good practices and improve the hygiene in slaughterhouses.

COM provided an update on the **state of play of the proposal for a Regulation on official controls.**

It summarized the main objectives of the proposal adopted on 6th May 2013:

- simplify and clarify the current legal framework applicable to official controls,

- consolidate the integrated approach to controls across the agri-food chain in its widest meaning and include in its scope plant health, plant reproductive material, plant protection products and animal by-products,

- ensure that Member States provide adequate resources to control authorities through fees charged to operators.

COM drew the attention to the fact that as per COM Work Programme announced at the end of 2014, the COM proposal on plant reproductive materials (PRM) was withdrawn. The COM's current stance is that despite the withdrawal of the proposal, the seeds and propagating material sector, as regulated by the current 12 directives, should still remain in the scope of the official control proposal.

The position of the EU Parliament was adopted at first reading plenary vote in April 2014. The responsible Committee is COMENVI.

Regarding the discussion in the Council, technical discussions on the official control proposal have been taking place within the Joint Working Party of Veterinary Experts (Public Health) and Phytosanitary Experts.

The Latvian Presidency has made a good progress on the file and aims for an early second reading agreement. The understanding is that the Council Working Party meeting held on 16th and 17th April were the last ones planned by the Presidency. Further discussions on specific controversial issues (notably on the financing of official controls) will be held at "Attachés level", where the Presidency hopes to overcome any disagreement and receive the mandate from COREPER.

Comments and questions raised

FEFAC asked on relations between official controls and private sector controls, on possibilities of interface at the level of the future electronic information exchange system allowing MS to share information on official controls swiftly.

EUROGROUP for Animals expressed concern regarding the rules on the mandatory presence of veterinarians.

FOODDRINK EUROPE asked why the common position was not mentioned.

COM confirmed that the comments are noted and will be passed to responsible colleagues.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

COM thanked all the participants for their constructive contributions, invited them to send possible suggestions for the topics to be discussed in the next plenary meeting that is scheduled for 27 November 2015 and closed the meeting.