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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

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Guidance document on the implementation of certain provisions of
Regulation (EC) No 852/2004
On the hygiene of foodstuffs

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PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is mainly directed at food businesses and competent authorities, and aims to give guidance on the implementation of the new food hygiene requirements and on related subjects.

NOTE

This document is an evolving document and will be updated to take account of experiences and information from the Member States, from competent authorities, food businesses and the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs¹ (hereafter “the Regulation”) was adopted on 29 April 2004. It lays down general hygiene requirements to be respected by food businesses at all stages of the food chain. Since the adoption of the Regulation, the Commission has been requested to clarify a number of aspects thereof. This document aims to follow-up these requests.

The Commission’s Health and Consumers Directorate General has held a series of meetings with experts from the Member States in order to examine and reach consensus on a number of issues concerning the implementation of the Regulation.

In the interest of transparency, the Commission has also promoted discussion with stakeholders so as to allow different socio-economic interests to express an opinion. To this end the Commission has organised a meeting with representatives from producers, industry, commerce and consumers to discuss issues related to the implementation of the Regulation.

It was considered that these meetings and discussions should continue in the light of the experience gained by the full application of the Regulation from 1 January 2006.

It should be noted that matters relating to the non-compliance of national legislation with the Regulation remain outside the scope of this exercise and will continue to be dealt with in accordance with established Commission procedures.

The present document aims to assist all players in the food chain to better understand and to apply correctly and in a uniform way the Regulation. However, this document has no formal legal status and in the event of a dispute, ultimate responsibility for the interpretation of the law lies with the Court of Justice.

For a complete understanding of the different aspects of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, it is essential to be also familiar with other parts of Community legislation, and in particular with the principles and definitions of:

- Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety². (also referred to as the General Food Law),

¹ OJ No L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 3

² OJ No L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1

- Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare³,
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs⁴, and
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 2074/2005 of 5 December 2005 laying down implementing measures for certain products under Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and for the organisation of official controls under Regulations (EC) No 854/2004 and No 882/2004, derogating from Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and amending Regulations (EC) No 853/2004 and No 854/2004⁵.

A separate guidance document on Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 has been established.

(See http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/food/foodlaw/guidance/index_en.htm)

³ OJ No L 191, 28.5.2004, p. 1

⁴ OJ No L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 1

⁵ OJ No L 338, 22.12.2005, p. 27

2. OBLIGATIONS OF FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS

The Regulation must be implemented by food businesses. They must ensure that all the requirements are properly implemented in order to ensure food safety.

Food businesses that handle food of animal origin must, in addition to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, also implement the appropriate requirements of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

3. SCOPE

3.1. Primary production

The Regulation covers primary production.

Primary production is defined in Article 3(17) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002:

‘Primary production’ means the production, rearing or growing of primary products including harvesting, milking and farmed animal production prior to slaughter. It also includes hunting and fishing and the harvesting of wild products.

The rules applicable to primary production are laid down in Annex I, Part A, point I(1) of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

Annex I, Part A, point I(1) of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 also covers the following operations that are associated with primary production:

- The transport, storage and handling of primary products at the place of production, provided that this does not substantially alter their nature;
- The transport of live animals, where this is necessary to achieve the objectives of this Regulation; and
- In the case of products of plant origin and fishery products: transport operations to deliver primary products, the nature of which has not been substantially altered, from the place of production to an establishment.

Therefore the term “primary production” in this guidance document should be understood as primary production including these associated operations.

Primary production is a term to describe activities at the farm or at a similar level and includes *inter alia*:

- Production, rearing or growing of plant products such as grains, fruits, vegetables and herbs as well as their transport within and storage and handling of products (without substantially changing their nature) at the farm and their further transport to an establishment.
- Production, rearing or growing of food producing animals at the farm and any activity linked therewith as well as the transport of meat producing animals to a market, a slaughterhouse or the transport of animals between farms.
- Production, rearing and growing of snails at the farm and their possible transport to a processing establishment or to a market.
- Milking and the storage of milk at the farm.
- The production and collection of eggs at the producer's premises, but not egg packaging operations.
- Fishing, the handling of fishery products (without changing their nature substantially) on board vessels (except freezer and factory vessels) and their transport to the first establishment (including auction halls) on land. This includes the fishing, handling and transport of fish caught in fresh water (rivers, lakes).
- Production, rearing, growing and harvesting of fish in aquaculture farms and their transport to an establishment.
- The production, rearing, growing, relaying and harvesting of live bivalve molluscs and their transport to a dispatch centre, purification centre or processing establishment.
- The harvesting of mushrooms, berries, snails etc. in the wild and their transport to an establishment.

Remarks on primary production:

- **General rules on primary production** are laid down in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. In addition, for certain food (e.g. raw milk, live bivalve molluscs), more **detailed rules** are laid down in Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 (see section 3.7 of the guidance document on the implementation of certain provisions of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 on the hygiene of food of animal origin).
- **Fishery products the nature of which has not been substantially altered**: see guidance given under point 3.7.

- **Egg packing centres**: in accordance with the definitions and requirements of the new food hygiene rules, egg packing centres (even when situated at the farm of production) are not considered primary production.
- **Milk collection centres**: once raw milk has been collected from the farm, the product has left the level of primary production. Milk collection centres where raw milk is stored after collection from a farm and before dispatch to a milk processing establishment are not considered primary production.
- **Honey and other food from bee production**: all the beekeeping activities must be considered as primary production. This includes beekeeping (even if this activity extends to having bee-hives at a distance from the bee-keeper's premises), the collection of honey, its centrifugation and the wrapping and/or packaging at the beekeeper's premises. Other operations outside the beekeeper's premises (e.g. the centrifugation and/or wrapping/packaging of honey) cannot be considered as primary production, including those carried out on behalf of beekeepers by collective establishments (e.g. cooperatives).
- **Freezer and factory vessels**: the handling, storage and transport of fishery products on board freezer and factory vessels are not covered by the term "primary production".

- **Sprout production**:

In addition to this guidance, the Commission adopted a series of legislative measures on the approval of establishments producing sprouts, on traceability, on import conditions and on microbiological criteria.

I. Guidance for the production of sprouts:

- In line with Annex I, Part A, Chapter II 2 and Chapter II 5. (e), food business operators should store seeds for sprouting in appropriate conditions designed to prevent harmful deterioration and protect them from contamination. At all stages of production and distribution, sprouts should be protected against any contamination likely to render the food unfit for human consumption . Adequate procedures should be in place to control pests and to prevent domestic animals from having access to places where food is prepared, handled or stored .

- In line with Annex I, Part A, Chapter II 5. (b) and with the EFSA recommendations, food business operators should wash seeds with potable water immediately before germination. The water used for the washing of seeds should not be reused in the production of sprouts.

- In line with Annex I, Part A, Chapter II 5. (c), the use of potable water should be deemed necessary as initial source of irrigation water for the production of sprouts to prevent contamination.

- In line with the EFSA recommendations, food business operators should ensure that sprouts are to be kept refrigerated from end of production to placing on the market, including transport.

II. Personal hygiene:

In line with Annex I, Part A, Chapter II 5. (d), food business operators should ensure that staff handling sprouts are in good health and undergo training on health

risks. In particular, staff producing or harvesting sprouts should maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and should wear suitable, clean and, where necessary, protective clothing. No person suffering from, or being a carrier of a disease likely to be transmitted through food or afflicted, for example, with infected wounds, skin infections, sores or diarrhoea should be permitted to handle seeds and sprouts or enter any food handling area in any capacity if there is any likelihood of direct or indirect contamination. Any person so affected and employed in a food business producing sprouts and who is likely to come into contact with food should report immediately the illness or symptoms, and if possible their causes, to the food business operator.

III. Transport:

Annex I, Part A, Chapter II 5. (a) and (b), conveyances and/or containers used for transporting foodstuffs should be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition to protect foodstuffs from contamination and are, where necessary, to be designed and constructed to permit adequate cleaning and/or disinfection. Receptacles in vehicles and/or containers should not be used for transporting anything other than foodstuffs where this may result in contamination.

3.2. Primary products

Primary products are defined in Article 2, paragraph 1, point (b) of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 as follows:

'primary products' means products of primary production including products of the soil, of stock farming, of hunting and fishing.

Primary products include *inter alia*:

- Products of plant origin, e.g. grains, fruits, vegetables, herbs, mushrooms, sprouted seeds.
- Products of animal origin, e.g. eggs, raw milk, honey, fishery products, live bivalve molluscs.
- Products harvested wild either from plant or animal origin, e.g. mushrooms, berries, snails etc.

Remarks on primary products:

- **Fresh meat** is not a primary product since it is obtained after slaughter.
- **Fishery products** remain primary products even after slaughter, bleeding, decapitation, gutting, removing fins, refrigeration and placing in containers for transport at the level of primary production. The products resulting from further handling of fishery products (e.g. filleting, packaging under vacuum etc.) are not primary products.

3.3. “Small quantities” of primary products as referred to in Article 1, paragraph 2(c) of the Regulation

The Regulation does not apply to small quantities of primary products supplied directly by the producer to the final consumer or to local retail establishments directly supplying the final consumer.

In general terms, the notion “small quantities” should be broad enough to allow *inter alia*:

- Farmers to sell primary products (vegetables, fruits, eggs, raw milk⁶ etc.) directly to the final consumer e.g. farm gate sales or sales at local markets, to local retail shops for direct sale to the final consumer and to local restaurants.
- Individuals who collect products in the wild such as mushrooms and berries to deliver their yield directly to the final consumer or to local retail shops for direct sale to the final consumer and to local restaurants.

Pursuant to Article 1, paragraph 3 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, it is up to Member States to further refine the notion of small quantities depending on the local situation, and to lay down under national law the rules necessary to ensure that the safety of the food is guaranteed (risk based approach).

In general, the rules under national law established by the Member States in respect of small quantities as referred to in Article 1, paragraph 2(c) should allow current practices to continue to apply, provided they ensure the achievements of the objectives of the Regulation.

3.4. Cross-border trade of small quantities of primary products

Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Regulation requires Member States to establish under national law the rules governing the supply by the producer of small quantities of primary products to the final consumer or to local retail establishments.

Occasionally, such supply may take place across borders in particular where the producer’s farm is situated in the neighbourhood of Member States’ borders.

The national rules to be adopted pursuant to Article 1, paragraph 3 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 must be subject to the general rules of the Treaty, and in particular Articles 28, 29 and 30 thereof.

3.5. Processing of primary products at the farm

Primary products can be processed at the farm, e.g. raw milk is processed into cheese, juice is extracted from fruit. These operations fall outside the activities

⁶ Under Article 10(8) of Regulation 853/2004, Member States may establish national rules prohibiting or restricting the placing on the market of raw milk intended for direct human consumption.

described as primary production and are therefore the subject of the food hygiene requirements of Annex II of the Regulation and, **with regard to food of animal origin**, also of the appropriate requirements in Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

Examples:

- The preparation of fruit juice at the farm

If a farm uses its harvest or part of its harvest (e.g. apples) to produce fruit juice at its premises, such farm exceeds the level of primary production. The activity of producing fruit juice is to be considered as an activity after primary production and it is therefore subject to the appropriate requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004.

- The production of cheese at the farm

Cheese is the result of processing raw or heat treated milk. Cheese is not, therefore, a primary product, even when made at the farm.

As a consequence, cheese production at the farm must comply with the appropriate requirements of food hygiene laid down in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

Remarks:

*1) Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 generally excludes retail (i.e. the handling and/or processing of food and its storage at the point of sale or delivery to the final consumer) from its scope. This means that where cheese **is manufactured and sold entirely at the farm or at a local market (e.g. weekly market, farmers market etc.)** to final consumers, these activities can be carried out in compliance with the appropriate requirements laid down in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, in particular in its Annex II, while not having to comply with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 apart from the requirements for raw milk. Where appropriate, compliance will also need to be ensured with national measures established under national law in the Member States on the basis of Article 1, paragraph 5(c) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.*

2) In order to accommodate processing at the farm or in order to preserve traditional methods of production, Member States may introduce national measures adapting the relevant infrastructural requirements in accordance with the procedure laid down for that purpose in Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and in Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004, where the traditional methods cannot be accommodated within the requirements the Regulations lay down.

3.6. Eggs and primary production

Taking into account the definition of primary production in Article 3(17) of Regulation 178/2002, and Annex I, Part A, point I(1) of Regulation 852/2004, primary production of eggs includes the handling of eggs, i.e. the collection and transport between buildings, and storage of eggs at the production site, provided that this does not substantially alter their nature. The packaging of eggs, either at the site of production or at a separate packing establishment falls outside the activities of primary production. These activities must therefore comply with the relevant requirements of Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, of Annex III, Section X of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and of Article 116 and Annex XIV of Regulation

(EC) No 1234/2007 establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products.

3.7. At the level of primary production, primary products may be transported, stored and handled provided that does not substantially alter their nature [see Annex I, Part A, point I.1(a) of the Regulation].

At the level of primary production, primary products are often subject to operations so as to ensure a better presentation, such as:

- Packaging without further treatment
- Washing of vegetables, removing leaves from vegetables, the sorting of fruit etc.
- The drying of cereals,
- The slaughter, bleeding, gutting, removing fins, refrigeration and wrapping of fish.
- Centrifugation of honey to remove honeycombs.

Such operations must be considered as normal routine operations at the level of primary production and must not lead to the need to satisfy food safety requirements in addition to the ones already applying to primary production.

On the other hand, certain operations carried out on the farm are likely to alter the products and/or to introduce new hazards to food e.g. the peeling of potatoes, the slicing of carrots, the bagging of salads with the application of packaging gases or the removal of gases. These operations cannot be considered as normal routine operations at the level of primary production nor as operations associated with primary production.

3.8. The occasional handling, preparation, storage and serving of food by private persons

Operations such as the occasional handling, preparation, storage and serving of food by private persons at events such as church, school or village fairs are not covered by the scope of the Regulation. This is made clear in recital 9 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. The second sentence states that:

"Community rules should only apply to undertakings, the concept of which implies a certain continuity of activities and a certain degree of organisation".

The term "undertaking" is integrated in the definition of a "food business" (in accordance with Article 3(2) of the General Food Law (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002), a "food business" must be an "undertaking"). Somebody who handles, prepares, stores or serves food occasionally and on a small scale (e.g. a church, school or village fair and other situations such as organised charities comprising individual volunteers where the food is prepared occasionally) cannot be considered as an "undertaking" and is therefore not subject to the requirements of Community hygiene legislation.

3.9. Food businesses and internet sales

Certain businesses offer their goods for sale via the internet. Although such trade is not specifically referred to in the Regulation, such businesses fall within the

definition of a food business and the relevant requirements of food law are applicable to them.

4. THE TERMS “WHERE NECESSARY”, “WHERE APPROPRIATE”, “ADEQUATE” AND “SUFFICIENT”.

Where the Annexes to the Regulation use the terminology “where necessary”, “where appropriate”, “adequate” or “sufficient”, it is up to the food business operator in first instance to decide whether a requirement is necessary, appropriate, adequate or sufficient to achieve the objectives of Regulation (EC) 852/2004.

In determining whether a requirement is necessary, appropriate, adequate or sufficient to achieve the objectives of the Regulation, account should be taken of the nature of the food and of its intended use.

The operator may justify his choice under the procedures based on the HACCP principles or under the operational procedures of his business. Also the guides to good practice referred to in Article 7 of the Regulation may offer useful guidance and indicate what is best practice in cases where the words “where necessary”, “where appropriate”, “adequate” and “sufficient” are used.

5. FLEXIBILITY

5.1. General background

The Regulation lays down principles to be applied by all food businesses. In order to ensure that solutions for specific situations are available without compromising food safety, the Regulation provides for flexibility. For that purpose, Member States may take national measures adapting the requirements of certain Annexes of the Regulation. National measures shall:

- Have the aim of enabling the continued use of traditional methods of production, processing and distribution of food, or
- Have the aim of accommodating the needs of food businesses situated in regions that are subject to geographical constraints.
- In other cases, they shall apply only to the construction, layout and equipment of establishments.

Member States wishing to adopt national measures shall, for reasons of transparency, notify the Commission and the other Member States thereof (see Article 13, paragraph 5 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004). The Commission and the other Member States have the right to make comments. Where these comments lead to diverging views, the matter shall be brought to the Standing Committee and a decision may be taken.

5.2. Traditional methods of production

In the Member States, food may be manufactured in accordance with longstanding traditions that have proven their safety although not always fully in line with certain technical requirements of the Regulation. The Regulation recognises the need for maintaining these traditional methods of production which are proof of the cultural

diversity of Europe, and provides therefore for the flexibility needed by food businesses.

There is no intention in the context of this document to proceed to making an inventory of the traditional methods of production in the Member States. It is up to the competent authorities to take the necessary initiatives or act on possible requests from food businesses for flexibility.

5.3. HACCP and flexibility

The HACCP methodology is flexible by its very nature, being based on a limited set of principles and procedures supporting the objective of food safety, without compelling food businesses to comply with rules or to implement procedures which are not relevant or adapted to the specific context for their activity.

Guides to good practice for hygiene and for the application of the HACCP principles developed by the food business sectors themselves, either at national or at Community level, should help businesses to implement HACCP-based procedures tailored to the characteristics of their production.

The Commission issued guidance explaining the main possibilities for flexibility with regard to the implementation of HACCP-based procedures.

6. THE REGISTRATION AND APPROVAL OF ESTABLISHMENTS

6.1. What does registration of establishments mean in practice?

Article 6, paragraph 2 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 requires each establishment of a food business operator to be registered with the competent authority.

The purpose of registration is to allow the competent authorities in the Member States to know where establishments are situated and what their activities are so as to enable official controls to be carried out whenever judged necessary by the national competent authority and in accordance with the general principles laid down in Article 31 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 which requires competent authorities in the Member States to establish procedures for feed and food business operators to follow when applying for registration.

Registration should be a simple procedure whereby the competent authority is informed about the address of the establishment and the activity carried out. Where this information is already available from other sources e.g. registration for environmental or animal health purposes or for other administrative purposes, that information may also be used for food hygiene purposes.

Certain businesses are specialised in trading food (brokers). While they may arrange for the movement of food between suppliers or to retailers, they do not necessarily handle the food or even store it on their premises (which may effectively be an office). Provided they meet the definition of “food business” and “food business operator”, then the registration requirement applies.

6.2. The approval of establishments

Community law requires certain establishments in which food of animal origin is handled to be approved before they can place their products on the market. For more information see section 4 of the guidance document on the implementation of certain provisions of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 on the hygiene of food of animal origin.

6.3. The approval of establishments under national law

The Regulation allows Member States to require the approval of food establishments for which Community law (including Regulation (EC) No 853/2004) does not require approval.

If this procedure is applied by the Member States, Community law does not impose the use of an identification mark or any restriction on the placing on the market of food from establishments that are the subject of a national approval procedure.

7. GUIDES TO GOOD PRACTICE FOR HYGIENE AND FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE HACCP PRINCIPLES

Articles 7-9 of the Regulation provide for the development of guides to good practice for hygiene and for the application of the HACCP principles.

Although they are a voluntary instrument, such guides enable food business sectors **(at the level of primary production and after primary production)** to describe in more detail how operators can comply with the legal requirements which are expressed in more general terms in the Regulation.

In the new food hygiene rules, a number of requirements are laid down that:

- Leave room for judgement to the food business operator: for that purpose, the terms “where necessary”, “where appropriate”, “adequate” and “sufficient” are introduced into the Regulation (e.g. “*an adequate number of washbasins is to be available*”, or, “*cleaning and disinfection of equipment are to take place at a frequency sufficient to avoid any risk of contamination*”), or
- Are formulated as an objective to be reached, but where the food business operator must develop the means to reach the objective (e.g. with regard to the heat treatment in hermetically sealed containers, “*any treatment is to prevent the product from becoming contaminated during the process.*”)

Guides to good practice are a useful tool to assist food business operators in:

- Making a judgement on the necessity, appropriateness, adequacy or sufficiency of a particular requirement, e.g. to indicate what an adequate number of washbasins is, and
- Defining the means to reach the objectives that are defined in the Regulation e.g. to indicate what the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of equipment should be.

Guides may also usefully include procedures that must ensure a proper implementation of the Regulation, such as:

- Procedures to prevent the introduction of hazards at the level primary production,
- A procedure for the cleaning and disinfection of food businesses,
- A procedure for pest control, and
- A procedure to ensure that the requirement to develop HACCP-based procedures is fulfilled.

8. DOCUMENTATION

8.1. The Regulation creates the need for food business operators to establish, under the HACCP-based procedures, documentation **commensurate with the nature and the size of the business**.

8.2. **Although not required by the Regulation**, it may be good practice for food business operators to establish also other documentation that could assist in meeting the objectives of the Regulation. In establishing such documentation, food business operators may wish to take account of the following:

Documentation on structural requirements

Documentation may relate to structural requirements in order to clarify a number of requirements of a general nature contained in the Regulation, such as:

- Annex II, Chapter II, point 1, (a) and (b), where the surfaces of floors and wall are required to be “of impervious, non-absorbent, washable and non-toxic materials unless food business operators can satisfy the competent authority that other materials used are appropriate”, and (f), where the surfaces in general are to be of “smooth, washable, corrosion-resistant and non-toxic materials, unless food business operators can satisfy the competent authority that other materials used are appropriate”.
- Annex II, Chapter III, point 2(b), where the surfaces in contact with food are required to be of “smooth, washable, corrosion-resistant and non-toxic materials, unless food business operators can satisfy the competent authority that other materials used are appropriate”.

Documentation of operational requirements

Documentation may relate to operational requirements such as:

- Annex II, Chapter IX, point 4: “Adequate procedures are to be in place to control pests”.
- The need to justify choices with regard to the terms “where necessary”, “where appropriate”, “adequate” and “sufficient”.
- The procedures and records based on HACCP principles.

8.3. Together, this documentation will constitute operational procedures that are an important element in ensuring food safety.

There are different possibilities for establishing that documentation:

- Guides to good practice may contain part or all of the documentation that is needed.
- Food businesses may decide to establish ad hoc documentation appropriate for their situation.
- Under the HACCP-based procedures (taking into account the flexibility needed for food businesses, in particular for small businesses).

Documentation could be provided in the form of results of laboratory tests, pest control reports, temperature measurements, and in the form of literature citations, documentation provided by the supplier of the construction materials etc.

9. TECHNICAL ISSUES (ANNEXES)

9.1. Heat treatment (Annex II, Chapter XI)

In the case of a heat treatment of food placed on the market in a hermetically sealed container, the Regulation requires food business operators to apply a heat treatment process that conforms to an internationally recognised standard. Such standards have for example been developed by Codex Alimentarius, e.g.:

- Code of Hygienic practice for Milk and milk products (CAC/RCP 57-2004).
- Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Low and Acidified Acid Canned Foods (CAC/RCP 23-1979, rev. 2 (1993)).
- Code of Hygienic Practice for Aseptically Processed and Packaged Low-Acid foods (CAC/RCP 40-1993).
- Recommended International Code of Hygienic Practice for Canned Fish (CAC/RCP 10-1976).

9.2. Training (Annex II, Chapter XII)

Training is an important tool to ensure effective application of good hygienic practices.

Training as referred to in Annex II, Chapter XII of the Regulation should be commensurate to the tasks of staff in a particular food business and be appropriate for the work to be carried out.

Training can be achieved in different ways. These include in-house training, the organisation of training courses, information campaigns from professional organisations or from the competent authorities, guides to good practice etc.

With regard to HACCP training for staff in small businesses, it must be kept in mind that such training should be proportionate to the size and the nature of the business and should relate to the way that HACCP is applied in the food business. If guides to good practice for hygiene and for the application of HACCP principles are used,

training should aim to make staff familiar with the content of such guides. If it is admitted that in certain food business where food safety can be achieved by implementing prerequisite requirements, training should be adapted to that situation.

9.3. Transport (Annex II, Chapter IV)

Adequate transport systems must be in place to ensure that foods remain safe and suitable for human consumption upon delivery.

In the case of transport of bulk foodstuffs (i.e. unwrapped or unpacked foodstuffs in direct contact with the contact surface of the food transportation unit and the atmosphere) in liquid, granulate or powder form, the Regulation requires food business operators to use dedicated transport means.

The background for this requirement is that there is substantial proof about the higher risk for these foods to be contaminated due to their nature, when transported in vehicles or containers that were used beforehand for other purposes. This remains true even after cleaning of these means.

Since the word "granulate" may mean "in granular form" or "in grains", several requests have been made to clarify what is understood under that wording. In general terms, it would be logical to limit this requirement to foodstuffs that have been given a granular characteristic after processing (e.g. sugar) or grains that have been husked, washed or prepared and that are to be wrapped/packaged for sale to the final consumer. This should therefore exclude primary products such as grains, which have been harvested and need further preparation, with or without processing, before being intended for human consumption.

9.4. Clean water (Annex I and Annex II, Chapter VII)

The provision for food business operators to possibly use clean water is referred to in several parts of the hygiene Regulations.

Where fish or live bivalve molluscs are handled as a part of the primary production, potable water or clean water (clean seawater or fresh water of similar quality) shall be used to prevent contamination:

- *'Food business operators rearing, harvesting or hunting animals or producing primary products of animal origin are to take adequate measures, as appropriate: [...] (d) to use potable water, or clean water, whenever necessary to prevent contamination;'* (Annex I, Part A, (II)(4)(d) of Regulation (EC) 852/2004);

Similar provisions are laid down in respect of the handling of fishery products or live bivalve molluscs when not a part of the primary production:

- *'Clean water may be used with whole fishery products. Clean seawater may be used with live bivalve molluscs, echinoderms, tunicates and marine gastropods; clean water may also be used for external washing. When clean water is used, adequate facilities and procedures are to be available for its supply to ensure that it is not a source of contamination for the foodstuff.'* (Annex II, Chapter VII, Point 1 (b) of Regulation (EC) 852/2004);
- *'[...] clean seawater may be used for the handling and washing of fishery products, the production of ice used to chill fishery products and the rapid cooling of crustaceans and molluscs after their cooking'* (Annex III, Section VIII, Point 3 (c) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004).

Remarks concerning the conditions of its use:

Both in primary production and in further handling of fishery products or live bivalve molluscs after primary production, measures must be taken to ensure that the clean water used is not a source of contamination for the fishery product or live bivalve molluscs. Procedures to monitor and document the safety/quality of the water must be put in place by operators. These measures must be included in the HACCP-based procedures, when clean water is to be used at any stages after primary production.

It is the task of the competent authority to verify whether the procedures developed by the operators are sufficient and carried out properly and do not pose a risk to consumers.

- **When deciding to use such water** and/or when developing procedures based on the HACCP principles, food business operators should pay attention to different aspects, such as:
 - Studying the composition of the water (including possible contaminants, e.g. chemical, microbiological, toxic algae, etc) at the intake water point and its possible variations (seasonal effects, rainfall dependent discharges, etc) to ensure that it does not contain micro-organisms, harmful substances or toxic marine plankton in quantities capable of directly or indirectly affecting the safety of the food,
 - Assessing the impact of natural or man-made contamination sources and the possible protective measures to address them (a river mouth, dredging operations, etc.),
 - Describing the water production (reclamation, treatment, etc), storage and distribution systems.

- **When making use of such water**, food business operators must ensure that it is not a source of contamination for fishery products or live bivalve molluscs. There are different means of reaching this objective, such as:
 - Pumping water for the production of clean water from a position that avoids contamination of the water supply, avoiding polluted areas, pumping water in depth, pumping water in remote areas). This may be enough for vessels operating in open water.
 - Using a water treatment system to ensure that the requirements for clean water are met. This may involve a particle retention step, followed by an adsorption step and a sanitising step, and/or
 - Other appropriate procedures.

Guides to good practices may be appropriate tools to assist food business operators in defining these means so as to ensure that clean water used is not a source of contamination for the fishery product.

9.5. Food premises (Annex II, Chapter I)

The notion of "food premises" is not limited to the rooms where foodstuffs are handled or processed. It includes, additionally, and where applicable, the immediately surrounding area within the perimeter of the food business operation site.

All required operations must take place within the perimeter of the food premises unless otherwise specified (e.g. officially authorised vehicle washing facilities).

9.6. High pressure processing (HPP)

High Pressure Processing is a food processing technology which applies high pressure to solid or liquid foods to improve their safety and in some cases, organoleptic properties and quality.

HPP is based on the principle that bacteria may be reduced by a combination of heat and pressure during a certain time period. When this happens under atmospheric pressure, it is called a heating treatment such as pasteurisation, when the pressure is increased, it is called HPP. When the purpose is to reduce bacterial load, HPP is mostly carried out between 400 to 600 Mega Pascal (MPa) at room temperature, although due to the effect of pressure, the temperature of the product in the pressure chamber can rise by 3-6°C for every 100 MPa increase in pressure, depending on the composition of the product.

HPP is applied mainly to pre-packed juices, sauces, dips, fishery products, meat products and ready-to-eat meals.

Authorisation of HPP

HPP is considered as physical (by pressure) way to reducing contamination when it is used for reduction of the bacterial load. It is not subject to authorisation at EU level. Member States may decide if prior authorisation is required. If a Member State

would like to regulate the use of this process, it should first notify⁷ this to the Commission and other Member States. Without notification on certain conditions of use, HPP is assumed to be authorised.

In the context of the Novel Food Regulation⁸ a new process is not novel just because it is new. Only where the new process has an effect on the composition or structure of a food which affects its nutritional value, metabolism or level of undesirable substances, the product resulting from the HPP would be subject to authorisation under the novel food legislation. It is not expected that a food will be subject to authorisation under the Novel Food Regulation just because of the use of HPP despite the fact that, at the introduction of HPP, "pasteurised fruit-based preparations produced using high pressure treatment", was authorised⁹.

Compliance with the General Food Law

Food business operators considering the use of stand-alone HPP establishments have responsibilities under Articles 17 to 19 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002¹⁰ to ensure their foods satisfy the requirements of food law which are relevant to their activities and to verify that such requirements are met at all steps in the process.

These responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that foods satisfy the requirements of relevant food law
- Verifying that such requirements are met
- Ensuring that appropriate traceability, including by respecting the rules on identification marking clarified below, and recall systems are in place

Hygiene rules

All food business operators considering the use of HPP should at least inform this activity to their supervisory competent authority in accordance with Article 6 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004¹¹.

The application of HPP to food of animal origin for which Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004¹² lays down requirements is subject to approval of the

⁷ According to for the notification procedure laid down by Directive (EU) 2015/1535 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 September 2015 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical regulations and of rules on Information Society services (OJ L 241, 17.9.2015).

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2015/2283 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2015 on novel foods, amending Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EC) No 258/97 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulation (EC) No 1852/2001 (OJ L 327, 11.12.2015, p. 1–22).

⁹ Table 1 of the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/2470.

¹⁰ Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1).

¹¹ Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs (OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 1).

¹² Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin (OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 55).

establishment for this purpose before starting any treatment. In cases where exclusively other food, including composite products containing only processed products of animal origin, is HPP treated only registration is required.

The definition of "processing" in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 refers to any action that substantially alters the initial product. Examples provided do not include HPP but does include heating (such as pasteurisation). The list of examples is not exhaustive and since the effect on most food matrixes is very similar to heating (but caused by different pressure/temperature/time conditions), HPP with the purpose of decontamination should be considered as processing. Standalone HPP establishments must be approved as processing plant if (partly) dealing with food of animal origin.

In the case of treatment of fresh meat, the product becomes a meat preparation when the processing is insufficient to modify the internal muscle structure¹³, e.g. when the modification is only superficially while the internal muscle structure cannot be visually or histologically differentiated from untreated fresh meat. In case the muscle structure is modified throughout the whole piece of meat, it becomes a meat product.

The effectiveness of HPP treatments will be dependent on the pressure applied, the holding time, temperature, the type of food matrix and the target organism. Therefore process validation within the procedures based on the HACCP principles in Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, is essential to evaluate the degree of reduction of bacterial load.

As regards identification marking¹⁴ (ID) in a standalone HPP plant of food of animal origin (e.g. pre-packed meat products or dairy products), the following approach is considered in line with Point A (1) and (2) of Section I to Annex II of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004: The legal requirements allow the producer to put its ID mark on the overall packaging/wrapping to send to the HPP plant, and:

- If, after treatment, the products goes directly from the HPP plant to a retailer, not further handling the product, the ID mark of the HPP must be put on the consumer package;
- If, after treatment, the products goes to another establishment (e.g. return to the producer), the ID mark of the HPP plant can be on the overall packaging or the wrapping and the other (last handling) plant should put its ID mark which may include the consumers package (if not done before the HPP).

There must preferably be only one ID mark and the one to be on the label is that of the last operator handling the product. Both ID marks of the HPP plant and of the producer may be put on the label as long as it is crystal clear who did what.

Official controls on HPP

Official controls by competent authorities in HPP plants should focus on the most relevant requirements for food business operators clarified in this section. In addition

¹³ See definition of meat preparation in Point 1.15 of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

¹⁴ See Annex II, Section I (A) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004.

to the requirements in Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls¹⁵, specific attention should be paid to the verification of:

- The practical application of traceability requirements in particular in stand-alone HPP plants;
- Approval of the establishment including its HPP activity, when required;
- Documented evidence of their process validation to be provided by the FBO; Ongoing verification of the validated process as part of the procedures based on the HACCP is also required
- Compliance with requirements on microbiological criteria
- Compliance with identification marking.

Other legislation on food safety

It is obvious that any other relevant legislation on food safety is applicable to HPP treatment (other provisions in Hygiene Regulations (EC) Nos 852/2004, 853/2004 and 2073/2005 (microbiological criteria), Regulation (EC) No 1935/2004 on food contact materials,

¹⁵ Until 14 December 2019, Regulations (EC) No 882/2004 and 854/2004 apply.