



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate C - Scientific Opinions

C3 - Management of scientific committees II; scientific co-operation and networks

Opinion

of the Scientific Committee on Food

in respect of *Listeria monocytogenes*

expressed on 22 June 2000

Terms of Reference

The Scientific Committee on Food (SCF) is requested to report on the extent to which it can support the conclusions and recommendations by the Scientific Committee Veterinary Measures relating to Public Health (SCVPH) in its opinion on *Listeria monocytogenes*¹, and where appropriate give its own opinion. In doing this, attention should be given to food of non-animal origin and food of animal origin at stages not subject to particular provisions pursuant to the existing Community legislation.

Background

The Commission is considering possible initiatives to reduce the incidence of food-borne listeriosis. A particular action is envisaged to lay down certain control measures for *L. monocytogenes* in food.

The SCVPH was requested to assess the risk to health from the presence of *L. monocytogenes* at different levels in ready to eat foods. The Committee took into account the principles for the development of microbiological criteria for animal products and products of animal origin intended for human consumption and to develop a risk assessment where appropriate.

As regards food of non-animal origin and food of animal origin at stages not subject to particular provisions pursuant to the existing Community legislation, Article 4 of Council Directive 93/43/EEC on the hygiene of foodstuffs² specifies that microbiological criteria may be adopted, after consulting the SCF.

It is useful to indicate that the SCVPH set up a joint working group including external experts and experts from both the SCVPH and from the SCF. The conclusions and recommendations in the above opinion appear to allow extending them to food of non-animal origin.

Conclusion

The SCVPH opinion on *L. monocytogenes* is a comprehensive assessment of the risk(s) to human health arising from the presence of this organism in foodstuffs.

The SCF agrees with the conclusions expressed in the SCVPH opinion. It supports the SCVPH's view that all strains of *L. monocytogenes* should be

¹ Opinion of the SCVPH on *Listeria Monocytogenes*, expressed on 23 September 1999, http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg24/health/sc/scv/out25_en.html

² Council Directive 93/43/EEC of 14 June 1993 on the hygiene of foodstuffs, Official Journal L 175 , 19/07/1993 p. 0001 – 0011.

treated as potentially pathogenic and that levels of this organism in foodstuffs should therefore be kept low in view of the potential for serious illness.

The SCF considers that the recommendation of the SCVPH concerning the concentration of *L. monocytogenes* in ready to eat food of animal origin should apply to all ready to eat food irrespective of its origin.

The SCF supports the recommendation of the SCVPH to reduce significantly the fraction of foods with a concentration of *L. monocytogenes* above 100 cfu/g at the point of consumption and that manufacturers' efforts should be focused on the food commodity types where *L. monocytogenes* can multiply in order to ensure that products are in compliance with this recommendation.

The SCVPH opinion largely focuses on products of animal origin and there is limited consideration of fruits and vegetables and products thereof. The SCF is aware that there are certain risks associated with the latter products and these should be taken into consideration. The SCF is currently considering microbiological hazards and risks that might originate from these foods especially when eaten raw.
