

Equivalency between EU and non-EU countries regarding animal welfare at slaughter

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Abstract

Much development work has already been done by the industry and the competent authorities in countries exporting meat to the EU, and these countries are well on their way to satisfying the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009. The major problem for animal welfare was that the electrical parameters used for water-bath stunning of poultry were not set at levels which ensured that birds were effectively stunned. In addition, there are meat quality issues when higher currents are used. Other areas to be further developed include clarification and formalisation of the tasks of the Animal Welfare Officer; certifying competence of the relevant staff; adapting and improving or completing the existing standard operating procedures. Several countries need to make changes to their transport/delivery practices or to the arrangements for accommodating animals, so that they respect the requirement to feed and bed animals if not slaughtered within 12 hours of their arrival at the slaughterhouse.

Keywords: animal welfare, audit, business operator, certification, exports, inspection

Introduction

The Food and Veterinary Office is the audit and inspection Directorate of the European Commission's DG Health and Consumers and has, since its inception, carried out checks on animal welfare at slaughter in both Member States of the European Union and in third countries.

While audits in the Member States have included those which were focused entirely on animal welfare at slaughter, the evaluation of this topic in third countries has been carried out at the same time as audits of hygiene standards in EU-approved establishments. Certificates accompanying exports to the EU testify that the meat comes from:

animals which have been treated in the slaughterhouse before and at the time of slaughter or killing in accordance with the relevant provisions of Union legislation.

Recommendations for action have been made where standards did not meet the minimum requirements of EU legislation in the case of Member States, or were not equivalent in the case of third countries. The reports of missions, to both Member States and third countries are published on the website of DG Health and Consumers. The actions taken or planned by the Central Competent Authorities (CCA) in response to the recommendations in these reports have also been published on the same site: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/index_en.htm.

Background

Up until 2011, audits have evaluated the implementation of the requirements for animal welfare at the time of slaughter and killing laid down in Council Directive 93/119/EC (1993). From 1 January 2013, Business Operators in both the EU and in third countries exporting to the EU, will be required to take greater responsibility for carrying out checks to ensure that requirements are followed. This includes requirements in the following areas: the layout, construction and equipment of slaughterhouses, handling and restraining of animals and stunning and slaughter.

In 2011, the Food and Veterinary Office plans to visit eight non-EU countries which export meat to the EU in order to gather information on current operations in EU-approved slaughterhouses and to assess how these will need to be adapted to meet the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (2009) which will apply from 1 January 2013. As these missions were carried out on a fact-finding basis in advance of the EU legislation coming into force, their reports will not be published.

Publication of an overview report of the main findings

At the time of writing, the findings from the visits to EU-approved slaughterhouses in non-EU countries have been presented as a draft report to the Competent Authorities involved in this series of inspections. An overview of the results of these missions will be published once the comments have been received from each of the authorities visited.

An overview report on the findings will then be produced and will be available under its reference number (DG[SANCO] 2011–6261) on the website of The Directorate General for Health and Consumers: http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/specialreports/index_en.htm.

References

- Council Directive (EC) 1993 93/119/EC** 1993 *Directive on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Slaughter or Killing* p 21. EC: Brussels, Belgium
- Council Regulation (EC) 2009 1099/2009/EC** *Regulation on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing* pp 1–30. EC: Brussels, Belgium