

MODERNIZATION OF MEAT INSPECTION IN EU

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First “risk-based” and legal fundamentals of meat inspection in Europe were established in 1899 by von Ostertag. Later, during 1904-1906, President T. Roosevelt’s investigation of Chicago meat packers led to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, what established legal basis for meat inspection in US. Since that methodology and approaches up to day have not changed significantly.

The main aim of meat inspection is to assure consumers, producers and processors about the safety and hygiene of meat. Public health hazards have to be checked within meat inspection procedures and as much as possible controlled through all food chain, including checks on live animals (*ante-mortem* inspection), carcass, offal, abattoirs, equipment, personnel and transportation. Thus, more integrated approach to ensure meat safety is essential. Meat inspection is important control part in the food chain to monitor various animal diseases as well as welfare standards and their implementation at the abattoir.

Traditional practices in many countries involve sensory checks, including sight, touch and incision to detect any presence of gross lesions, bruises or broken bones. However, these are not always suitable for detecting food-borne pathogens such as *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* or pathogenic *E. coli* strains, or contamination by chemical substances such as steroids or veterinary drug residues. Based on scientific knowledge and the needs from industry, competent authorities and all the Member States, the European Commission decided that meat inspection practices have to be modernised in the EU. Consequently, in May 2010, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was asked for scientific advice on the possible introduction of a risk-based approach to meat inspection, at all relevant stages of the meat production chain. Recently, EFSA launched various projects for a risk assessment, data monitoring of biological hazards, chemical contaminants, animal health and welfare to deliver scientific opinions and reports for the domestic swine, poultry, cattle, domestic sheep and goats, as well as farmed game and domestic solipeds. In 2011, EFSA made its first major contribution by publishing its scientific opinion on the public health hazards covered by inspection of swine meat, and the accompanying scientific report on harmonised epidemiological indicators for this type of meat inspection. Moreover, it was concluded that current inspection methods do not enable the early detection of the hazards and, do not differentiate food safety aspects, prevention of animal diseases or occupational hazards. At this stage, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has completed the first stage of work that will provide the scientific basis for the modernisation of meat inspection across the EU and what would enable risk managers to adapt meat inspection procedures to national requirements.

REFERENCES

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