



LMC Brussels Update: January 2015

COOL for processed meat - The EP Environment Committee adopted a resolution asking for origin labelling of meat used as an ingredient in processed foods. A Commission report (December 2013) concluded that introducing mandatory origin labelling for meat used as an ingredient (e.g. mandatory origin labelling either based on EU/non EU indication or indicating the specific Member State or 3rd Country) would necessarily increase operating costs for business (by up to 50%) as more detailed information and a full traceability system would be required. However MEPs emphasise the importance of rapidly restoring the confidence of European consumers after the horsemeat scandal, and point out that new estimates of the measure's likely impact on prices, based on the findings of a French research, diverge widely from the Commission's. The resolution is to be discussed and put to a vote at the EP plenary session in February.

Animal health - The EU has committed close to €180 million for 2015 to support veterinary programmes. Overall, 139 programmes have been selected for EU funding: Bovine Tuberculosis (about €62 million); Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (about €18 million); Rabies (€25 million); Salmonellosis (about €19 million); Bovine Brucellosis (about €10 million); Classical Swine Fever (€2 million); Avian Influenza (€2.2 million). A significantly increased amount has been allocated for Bluetongue (about €18.5 million, compared to €1.8 million last year) due to the recrudescence of the disease in 2014 in the eastern part of EU; also for the first time, about €5.7 million has been allocated for African Swine Fever programmes.

Foodborne diseases - 5,196 foodborne outbreaks were reported in the EU in 2013, finds a new EFSA report. Most of them were caused by Salmonella (22.5%), followed by viruses, bacterial toxins, and Campylobacter. Cases of the EU's most commonly reported foodborne illness Campylobacteriosis – mainly found in chicken meat – fell for the first time in five years, to 214,779 (the UK was among the countries with highest notification rate with 66,465 cases, and accounted for more than half of fatal outcomes in the EU). Salmonella cases also fell for the eighth year in a row, to 82,694 (8,465 for UK) as Member States improved their control programmes. Most Salmonella cases were attributed to the consumption of eggs but pig meat and products accounted for almost 9% of outbreaks. Cases of Listeria (mostly acquired from ready-meals) increased by 8.6% since 2012. The number of cases (1,763) is still low but of great concern particularly among elderly people and patients with weakened immunity.

Antimicrobials - EFSA co-published a report analysing possible relationships between the consumption of antimicrobial agents and the occurrence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in humans and food-producing animals in the EU. In both humans and animals, positive associations between consumption of antimicrobials and the corresponding resistance in bacteria were observed. The strongest associations between consumption and resistance in food-producing animals were found for the antimicrobials studied in relation to *E. coli*. In some cases, a positive association was also found between antimicrobial consumption in animals and resistance in bacteria from humans. For instance, positive associations were noted for consumption of tetracyclines in food-producing animals and the occurrence of resistance in Salmonella and Campylobacter from cases of human infection.

Lumpy Skin Disease (LSDV) – An EFSA opinion assesses the risk of introduction into the EU of the Lumpy Skin Disease. It finds that the virus is transmitted by mechanical vectors, but direct/indirect

transmission may occur. The main possible pathways for its introduction into free areas are considered to be the movement of infected animals (which in the EU could only happen through illegal transport) and vectors. Modelling shows that culling animals with generalised clinical signs seems to be sufficient to contain 90 % of epidemics around the initial site of incursion, but the remaining 10 % of simulated epidemics can spread up to 400 km from the site of introduction by six months after incursion. Applying whole-herd culling to infected farms substantially reduces the spread of LSDV and, the more rapidly farms are detected and culled, the greater the magnitude of the reduction is. EFSA recommends that, if LSDV entered the EU, rapid detection and prompt culling of infected herds should be considered as effective measures in limiting the spread and impact of the outbreaks.

Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) – According to an EFSA opinion, PPR is caused by a *Morbillivirus* closely related to rinderpest virus. Transmission is usually via contact with infected animals, or with their fresh secretions or faeces. Goats are considered more susceptible than sheep, and in the latter PPR may circulate undetected for some time. Therefore, there might be a risk that if PPR enters EU areas with dense sheep populations but low goat densities, such as Great Britain or Ireland, it would start circulating without being promptly detected, and would lead to widespread infection. Besides, PPR has a high within-herd transmission rate, therefore contacts between flocks, e.g. through common grazing areas, should be avoided when PPR is present. Live attenuated vaccines against PPR are available, safe and effective, and have been successfully used to control PPR epidemics, but no method exists for differentiating between infected and vaccinated animals; the development of one is recommended.

GMO cultivation - The European Parliament adopted its second reading position on a Directive to allow EU member states to restrict or ban the cultivation of crops containing GMOs on their own territory, even if this is allowed at EU level. The new rules would allow member states to ban GMOs on environmental policy grounds other than the risks to health and the environment already assessed by EFSA, as well as on other grounds such as town and country planning requirements. Particular attention is also given to preventing contamination of other crops. EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, criticised the move as stopping innovation in Europe and called on the Commission to respect the deadlines for GM approvals not only for cultivation, but also for imports of GM crops on which European livestock farmers are heavily dependent. The new Directive on GM cultivation is expected to be endorsed by the Council in the coming weeks and to come into force in spring 2015. The Commission is also expected to conduct a review of the EU's decision-making process for GM crop authorisation by May this year.

TTIP - The US Department of Agriculture announced the re-opening of US market to beef from the Republic of Ireland from January 2015. The Commission called on the US to extend their approval to the rest of the EU. They also published a number of EU legislative proposal texts relating to the ongoing trade negotiations with the US. The EU initial proposal on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures envisages e.g. the elimination of re-inspections or third party certification, the recognition of the principle of zoning, and alignment of regulatory standards on animal welfare. The final text will be subject to the negotiations taking place between the EU and US, with the next round on 2-6 February 2015.

Russian ban - At the January AGRI Council, the Russian embargo was high on the agenda. Some member states drew attention to the difficulties encountered by the pigmeat sector, for which no market measures had so far been taken. The AGRI Commissioner rejected calls to introduce private storage aid for pig meat at this stage but indicated its readiness to evaluate the market situation and discuss further measures at the next Council in March. In the context of the import ban on pig and pig products imposed by Russia in relation to African swine fever, and following the announcement

that Moscow might be prepared to re-open its market to some products, some Member States are keen to find a bilateral solution and are unofficially pressing this issue with Russia. Both Health and AGRI Commissioners stressed the importance of European unity and were adamant that bilateral negotiations were unacceptable.