

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(81) 500 final

Brussels, 14 September 1981

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE

amending Directive 71/118/EEC on health problems affecting trade
in fresh poultrymeat

(submitted to the Council by the Commission)

COM(81) 500 final

CONF. 500

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. Council Directive 71/118/EEC lays down the health conditions which must be met in the production of fresh poultrymeat. It describes, among other things, the health conditions which must be satisfied by slaughterhouses and cutting plants in order to be approved for poultrymeat production and the hygiene conditions for premises, staff and meat handling. The official veterinarian, helped where necessary by assistants, is responsible for checking that these conditions are observed.
2. The purpose of this proposal is to introduce into the abovementioned Directive provisions concerning the execution of microbiological checks on the standard of hygiene in establishments producing fresh poultrymeat. Microbiological control is, for the veterinary service responsible for inspection in such establishments, an additional and objective means of assessing the standard of hygiene; it provides inspectors and slaughterhouse operators with very useful indicators as to how conditions of general hygiene can be improved in the establishment. It is therefore useful for the inspection service to have the power to make microbiological checks compulsory where it deems necessary.
3. Microbiological checks must take in all stages of slaughtering and processing and include utensils, machinery and fittings. It must be left to the veterinary inspection service to indicate which stage or stages are to undergo microbiological checks.

It is too early to lay down microbiological criteria (limit values, etc.). Such criteria cannot be established until a study has been carried out at Community level, using harmonized methods and techniques, in order to collect the necessary basic facts and figures.

Until microbiological limit values have been worked out, the results of the microbiological examinations must be evaluated by comparing them with the results of previous examinations.

4. The microbiological checks as provided for in this proposal are to help the slaughterhouse operator and the veterinary inspection service to improve the general hygiene of the establishment; the results of these checks on their own must not be regarded as a criterion for condemning meat or for ordering the closure of an establishment.
5. So that the results can be compared, microbiological control must be carried out using the same methods.

It is also proposed that the microbiological methods to be employed for the control and any amendments to them should be decided by the Standing Veterinary Committee procedure.

6. This proposal is also aimed at amending paragraph 28b(i) of Chapter V of Annex I to Directive 71/118/EEC concerning control of the process of chilling poultry carcasses by the method of immersion in a counter flow of water. The text as it stands stipulates that the correct functioning of the chilling plant must be evaluated by comparing the contamination of the carcasses with total and enterobacteriaceae bacteria before and after immersion.

This proposal supplements this text by specifying - in the light of results of studies made - a uniform criterion of assessment.

It is also proposed that the microbiological methods to be employed for making this comparison be determined and any amendments thereto adopted by the Standing Veterinary Committee procedure.

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THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Article 43 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee,

Whereas Council Directive 71/118/EEC⁽¹⁾, as last amended by Directive 80/216/EEC⁽²⁾, lays down the hygiene conditions under which fresh poultrymeat must be produced in slaughterhouses and cutting plants; whereas that Directive provided for health inspections to be carried out; whereas microbiological analyses covering, inter-alia, equipment, utensils, carcasses and water, constitute a means for achieving an objective assessment of the standard of hygiene;

Whereas microbiological control provides the health inspection service with useful information and thus constitutes an effective means of checking and improving the standard of hygiene in establishments; whereas such control must provide the microbiological guideline within the meaning of the Council Decision⁽³⁾; whereas the veterinary inspection authority should therefore be granted the authority to make microbiological checks compulsory where it sees fit;

Whereas the execution of microbiological control in slaughterhouses and cutting plants must be based on the use of harmonized microbiological methods so that comparable results can be obtained;

(1) O.J. No L 55, 8.3.1971, p. 23
(2) O.J. No L 47, 21.2.1980, p. 8
(3)

Whereas provision should be made for employing Community microbiological methods for assessing the correct functioning of plant for chilling carcasses by immersion in a counter flow of water and its influence on the standard of hygiene; whereas a uniform criterion of assessment should also be laid down;

Whereas decisions laying down and, where necessary, amending the microbiological methods to be employed for microbiological control should be adopted in accordance with a procedure ensuring close cooperation between the Member States and the Commission,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE :

Article 1

The Directive 71/118/EEC is modified as follows :

1. In Article 4(1) the following words are added after "When carrying out ante mortem and post mortem inspections" : "the microbiological control provided for in Article 5(2a),".
2. In Article 5 the following paragraph is added after paragraph 2 :
"2a
(a) As part of the hygiene control of establishments the official veterinarian may, where he considers it necessary, have recourse to microbiological control in order to gather further information on which to base the assessment.

Microbiological control may relate to :

- the utensils, fittings and machinery, in order to determine the aerobic micro-organism count;
- poultrymeat, in order to determine, at all stages of the production line, the aerobic micro-organism, enterobacteriaceae or coliform count;
- the water in the various items of machinery, particularly the poultry carcass chilling tanks, in order to determine the aerobic micro-organism, enterobacteriaceae or coliform count.

- (b) The results of a microbiological examination must be assessed by comparing them with the results of previous checks.
- (c) The microbiological methods to be employed for microbiological control and the sampling plan shall be adopted within six months from the adoption of this Directive in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 12a.

The microbiological methods and the sampling plan may be amended in accordance with that same procedure.

- (d) The results of the microbiological control shall be recorded."

3. Paragraph 28b(i) of Chapter V of the Annex is amended to read as follows :

"- the correct functioning of the chilling plant and its effect on the hygiene level shall be evaluated by comparing the contamination of the carcasses by aerobic micro-organisms and enterobacteriaceae before and after immersion. Such comparison must be carried out when the plant is first brought into use and thereafter periodically and in any case each time any alterations are made to the plant. The microbiological methods to be employed for such comparison and the sampling plan shall be adopted in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 12a within six months from the adoption of this Directive.

The abovementioned methods and plan may be amended in accordance with that same procedure.

The functioning of the plant for chilling by immersion in a counter flow of water shall be regarded as acceptable in terms of hygiene where the geometric mean of aerobic micro-organisms and enterobacteriaceae found on the carcass at the point of exit from the chilling tank is lower than the number found before immersion using the same method. The functioning of the various parts of the chilling plant must be regarded so as to ensure a satisfactory standard of hygiene.

- the results of the abovementioned checks shall be recorded."

Article 2

Member States shall bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive on 1 July 1982 and immediately inform the Commission thereof.

Article 3

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council

The President