

Protection of human health: food of animal origin, specific hygiene rules

2000/0179(COD) - 03/11/2008 - Follow-up document

This **proposal for a Council Regulation** concerns the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the use of antimicrobial substances to remove surface contamination from poultry carcasses.

Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 lays down specific rules on the hygiene of food of animal origin for food business operators. It provides that food business operators are not to use any substance other than water to remove surface contamination from products of animal origin, unless the use of the substance has been approved in accordance with that Regulation. It provides that the use of approved substances is not to affect the obligations of food business operators to comply with the requirements of that Regulation.

- **In October 1998 and April 2003**, different scientific opinions were issued by **the Scientific Committee on Veterinary measures relating to Public Health (SCVPH)** and concluded that the use of antimicrobial substances can contribute to the decrease of pathogens in the poultry provided those substances are used in the framework of an integrated control system of the food chain. In the framework of the EC-USA Veterinary Agreement, the USA submitted files concerning the use of four antimicrobial substances (chlorine dioxide, acidified sodium chlorite, trisodium phosphate and peroxyacids) on poultry carcasses. These files were transmitted to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which adopted an opinion in December 2005. EFSA concluded that the use of these substances in the described conditions does not present any risk to public health and that the use of antimicrobial solutions does not replace the need for good hygienic practices during processing of poultry carcasses, particularly during handling. In a second opinion in December 2005, EFSA nevertheless pointed out that the information provided on peroxyacids indicated limited effectiveness, requiring specific conditions of use to be defined.

- **On 6 March 2008**, EFSA in its scientific opinion on the Assessment of the possible effect of the four antimicrobial treatment substances on the emergence of antimicrobial resistance concludes that there are currently no published data to conclude in whatever way on the occurrence of acquired reduced susceptibility to these substances when applied on poultry carcasses and to resistance to therapeutic antimicrobials.

- **Lastly, on 31 March 2008**, **the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR)** and **the Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER)** in their joint opinion on environmental impact and effect on antimicrobial resistance of the four substances used for the removal of microbial surface contamination of poultry carcasses conclude that there is not enough information available for producing comprehensive quantitative assessments that there is an environmental concern about the possibility to disseminate or select more resistant strains and, finally, that a low environmental risk has been estimated in relation to the potential residues in the carcasses.

Against this background, a draft Commission Regulation approving the use of four substances to remove surface contamination from poultry carcasses and setting down the conditions under which the substances may be used was submitted to the Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health, on 2 June 2008, for vote. The Committee delivered an opinion against the proposal: 26 Member States voted against and one Member State abstained.

Consequently, pursuant to Article 3(2) of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and in accordance with Article 5 of Council Decision 1999/468/EC modified by Council Decision 2006/512/EC, the Commission is

submitting to the Council a proposal relating to the measures to be taken, the Council having three months in which to act by a qualified majority, and is informing the Parliament.