Public health: monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents (amend. Decision 90/424/EEC, repeal. Directive 92/117/EEC)

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The purpose of this Communication is to report on the implementation of Community provisions intended to control Salmonella and the results since adoption of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 on the control of Salmonella and other specified food-borne zoonotic agents and of Directive 2003/99/EC on the monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents. This Communication also covers other Community legislation and activities to ensure/improve control of Salmonella along the food chain.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) reported 151 995 human cases of salmonellosis in 2007 in the 27 Member States of the European Union, being an incidence of 31.1 per 100 000 population. It is evident that the number of human cases is seriously underestimated and underreported. Part of the human cases was detected within the frame of 3131 food-borne outbreaks which is 64.5% of the total number of food-borne outbreaks of known origin. The *Salmonella* outbreaks affected 22 705 victims, of whom 14% were hospitalised and 23 died. *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium were responsible for 95% of outbreaks with known serotype.

The paper discusses the monitoring of salmonella in hunmans and feed, foodstuffs and animals. It also discusses the control of salmonella in feed and in animal populations and foodstuffs.

The current focus of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 is on controlling Salmonella in primary production of poultry and pigs. The Commission has been successful in setting reduction targets for Salmonella in line with the requirements in the legislation. In the case of pigs there is a significant delay in setting a target, due to the need to collect comparable prevalence data from all 27 Member States and to the requirement to carry out a cost/benefit analysis. A comprehensive cost/benefit analysis is considered necessary before setting a target for reduction in pigs because such reduction is not evident based on current scientific advice and experiences from certain Member States. The Commission notes that a reduction target will be established as soon as the cost/benefit analysis has been completed. Notwithstanding the delay in fixing a target for reduction, the legal framework currently in force, in particular the hygiene Regulations (Regulations (EC) No 852/2004 and 852/2004) and the Regulation on microbiological criteria in foodstuffs (Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005), already provides for a high level of food safety.

The Commission did not limit itself to the adoption of implementing provisions of the Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003, but took the initiative for additional actions needed to increase the chance of success of its approach, for example:

- by providing training to the competent authorities in the Member States and third countries;
- by convincing European stakeholders organisations actively to participate;
- by providing financial support to the Member States.

Control of Salmonella has also been integrated into a broad approach to control pathogens all along the food chain, in line with the Commission’s “farm to fork” approach and taking into account possible negative side-effects such as the increase of antimicrobial resistance.

The Commission has stepped up monitoring of Salmonella in order to check the results of its own efforts and of the efforts by Member States by collecting reference values in baseline studies, by networking laboratories and by harmonising the sampling protocol. The Commission's table in this report shows that the number of reported salmonellosis cases in the EU25 from 2004 until 2007 has fallen.

Since Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 on zoonoses control was adopted, the awareness and motivation of competent authorities and stakeholders to tackle Salmonella has increased significantly, often resulting in action before the Community provisions became mandatory. Furthermore, a significant reduction can be expected from 2009 (restrictions on table eggs) and from 2011 (food safety criterion on poultry meat).