

Food safety: electronic identification of bovine animals and beef labelling

2011/0229(COD) - 30/08/2011 - Initial legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to introduce a system of electronic identification of bovine animals on a voluntary basis with a view to enhancing food safety and the protection of animal health in the Union.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: rules on the identification and traceability of bovine animals were already introduced in 1997 were strengthened following the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic. Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 which establishes a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and labelling of beef and beef products includes the elements “double ear tag”, “holding register”, “cattle passport” and “computerised database”.

The Commission’s Communication concerning an "[Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the EU](#)" described the identification and registration of bovine animals and the voluntary labelling of beef and beef products as information obligations with special importance in terms of the burdens they impose on businesses. The Action Plan of the [new EU Animal Health Strategy](#) foresees the simplification of information obligations (e.g. holding registers, passports) by the Commission in the course of introduction of bovine electronic identification (EID). The use of electronic identifiers could help to reduce the administrative burden and paper-work.

Electronic identification (EID) based on radio frequency identification (RFID) has considerably developed during the last 10 years and provides for a faster and more accurate reading of individual animal codes directly into data processing systems (better and faster traceability of infected animals and/or infected food). The existing legislation on bovine identification does not reflect these latest technological developments.

The current legal framework does not prohibit Member States from using electronic identifiers on a voluntary basis, but this must be done in addition to the official conventional visible ear tags. As no harmonised technical EU standards have been established, different types of electronic identifiers and readers with different RFID frequencies could be used in different places.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: the impact assessment concluded that introducing bovine EID on a voluntary basis as a tool for official identification would allow actors to have time to familiarise themselves with the EID system and to identify the added value it would bring in particular circumstances. This option is preferable as it leaves open to EU Member States and all the private actors involved to organise themselves.

LEGAL BASIS: Articles 43(2) and 168(4)(b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

CONTENT: based on the results of consultations with interested parties, the Commission is proposing the revision of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 with a view to introducing new provisions regarding the identification of bovine animals and the voluntary labelling of bovine meat.

The general objectives of the proposal are as follows:

- to promote the competitiveness of the sector;
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to reduce administrative burdens and simplify the procedures regarding cattle passports and holding registers;

- to contribute to the improvement of animal health and public health by means of the more rapid and accurate traceability of bovine animals.

It is therefore proposed to amend the current identification system by providing for the voluntary introduction of electronic identification of bovines, with each Member State having the option to make this compulsory on its territory.

Under the voluntary system, bovine animals would be able to be identified by means of two conventional ear tags (current system) or by a clearly visible mark and one electronic identifier (i.e. an electronic ear tag or a bolus) conforming to EU-harmonised standards that have been officially approved.

In case the Member State opts for the mandatory regime, each bovine animal is to be identified by one conventional visible ear tag and one electronic identifier.

This proposal is being presented in parallel with the [proposal for a directive](#) to amend Council Directive 64/432/EEC as regards computer databases which are part of the surveillance networks in the Member States.

BUDGETARY IMPACT: the proposal has no impact on the Union's budget.

DELEGATED ACTS: the proposal contains provisions conferring on the Commission the right to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.