Food safety: electronic identification of bovine animals and beef labelling

2011/0229(COD) - 13/06/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Sophie AUCONIE (EPP, FR) on the amended proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 as regards electronic identification of bovine animals and deleting the provisions on voluntary beef labelling.

The committee recommends that the European Parliament's position in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows:

Traceability: the report stresses that tracing of beef to source via identification and registration is a **prerequisite for origin labelling** throughout the food chain. Those measures ensure consumer protection and public health and promote consumer confidence. Animals and meat entering the Union from third countries should be subject to the same identification and traceability requirements that apply to animals born in the Union.

Obligations on the identification of animals: the Commission shall ensure that identifiers used in the Union are interoperable and consistent with ISO standards. The proposal states that the means of identification shall be allocated to the holding, distributed and applied to the animals in a manner determined by the competent authority. Members state that this shall not apply to animals born before 1 January 1998 and not intended for intra-Union trade.

All means of identification applied to one animal shall bear the same unique identification code, which makes it possible to identify the animal individually together with the holding on which it was born. **By way of derogation**, in cases where it is not possible for the two individual means of identification to bear the same unique identification code, the competent authority may, under its supervision, **allow for the second means of identification to bear a different code** provided that full traceability is ensured and the individual identification of the animal, including the holding on which it was born, is possible.

The Commission shall supply other Member States, in a language, which is readily understandable by those Member States, with a **summary of the national rules governing the movement of animals** to Member States that have opted for compulsory EID and shall make them publicly available.

Time period for the application of the means of identification: the means of identification shall be applied within a maximum period from the birth of the animal to be determined by the Member State in which the animal was born. Members consider that that period shall not be longer than 60 days for the second means of identification, **for reasons related to the physiological development of the animals.**

Moreover, no animal may leave the holding where it was born before the two means of identification have been applied except in case of force majeure.

By way of derogation, for reasons related to the physiological development of the animals, the time period for identification of animals from third countries may be extended by up to 60 days for the second means of identification.

Removal or replacement of means of identification: Members add that no means of identification shall be **modified**, removed or replaced without the permission and without the control of the competent authority, and any modification must take place with the latter's permission.

Report on all movements, births and deaths of animals: farmers must enter up-to-date information directly into the computerised database within **seventy-two hours** of the occurrence of the event (the Commission proposal had specified 24 hours).

Training: the report requires any person responsible for the identification and registration of animals receive instructions and guidance on the relevant provisions of the Regulation, which shall be supplied, **at no cost to the recipient**, every time a change is made to the relevant provisions and as often as necessary. Member States shall share best practices in order to ensure good quality of training and information sharing across the Union.

Cloned animals: noting that there is no specific legislation on cloning, but that opinion polls show that this issue is of great interest for the European public. Members feel it is appropriate to ensure that beef derived from cloned animals or their descendants is **labelled as such** within 6 months of entry into force of the Regulation.

Voluntary labelling: the report stresses that even if it would be preferable to delete the 'system' of voluntary labelling (including specifications, sanctions, etc.), voluntary labelling still remains. There is a need for general rules to be drawn up to cover this and protect consumers (requiring objective information which can be checked by the relevant authorities and understood by consumers). These general rules will complete the horizontal legislation on labelling.

Delegated acts: the power to adopt delegated acts will be conferred on the Commission for a period of five years from the date of entry into force of the Regulation.

Report and legislative developments: no later than 5 years after the entry into force of the Regulation, the Commission shall a report dealing both with implementation of the Regulation and the technical and economic feasibility of introducing mandatory electronic identification everywhere in the Union. If this report concludes that electronic identification should become mandatory, it shall be accompanied by an appropriate legislative proposal.