

Food safety: electronic identification of bovine animals and beef labelling

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The Presidency presented a **report highlighting the progress** achieved during the first half of 2012 on two proposals:

- **this one amending regulation 1760/2000** as regards electronic identification of bovine animals and deleting the provisions on voluntary beef labelling;
- and the other [proposal amending directive 64/432/EEC](#) as regards computer databases which are part of the surveillance networks in the Member States.

The amendment to the regulation has two main objectives:

to introduce electronic identification (EID) as an official means of identification of bovine animals throughout the EU on a voluntary basis for the keepers;

to repeal the specific administrative procedures required for indication of voluntary information on the labels of beef and beef products.

The main elements of the discussion are as follows:

(1) Electronic identification : the Commission's proposal would introduce the option for keepers to use electronic identification as an official means of identification of bovine animals with immediate effect throughout the EU. Thus, it would allow keepers to identify their bovine animals with an electronic means of identification accompanying a conventional ear tag, or to keep the two conventional ear tags as currently required. As an additional step, each Member State could also decide to make electronic identification mandatory on its territory.

Some delegations expressed concerns about the fact that a keeper's choice for the EID option would entail mandatory recognition of EID as an official means of identification. While some delegations would prefer to introduce the new possibility as soon as possible, other delegations requested a transitional period and some would prefer not to change the current requirements at all. On the basis of discussions at the Working Party of Chief Veterinary Officers on 4 May 2012, the Presidency concluded that a **transitional period of seven years for introducing electronic identification as an official means of identification** would meet the approval of the majority of delegations.

(2) Means of identification : the Commission's proposal would confer to the Commission delegated and implementing powers to adopt all requirements for the means of identification.

Following the request made at the Working Party to more explicitly define the content and scope of this delegation of power, the Presidency presented a partial rewording of Article 4, providing i.a. for an exhaustive list of possible means of identification in an Annex.

(3) Derogations from the unique identification code : the Commission's proposal would require that all bovine animals bear in both official means of identification the same unique identification code, without exception. However, current technical conditions related to electronic identifiers make it difficult or impossible to follow this rule in a limited number of very specific situations.

The Presidency therefore introduced in the compromise text **two derogations** which cover these rare cases and are subject to strict conditions.

(4) Voluntary beef labelling : the Commission proposes to repeal the voluntary labelling system, which has to be applied for the indication of any additional information to that which is compulsory according to Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000. While the majority of delegations is in favour of repealing the system as proposed by the Commission, some delegations would prefer to keep it in place.

(5) Definitions : the Commission proposes to leave certain definitions of beef products for secondary legislation (as is the case today) and confer the power to the Commission to establish such definitions in the form of delegated acts. However, the Working Party preferred to reserve the power to establish definitions to the European Parliament and Council as co-legislators.

(6) Conferral of powers to the Commission : for reasons of clarity and consistency, the Working Party agreed to re-structure these provisions, putting them in each case directly into the relevant Article. The Working Party also agreed to define the objectives of the delegation of power more explicitly, in conformity with Article 290 TFEU. Furthermore, some powers were considered to be obsolete.

Sanctions : according to the Commission's amended proposal, the Commission should be empowered to adopt delegated acts to lay down administrative sanctions. This approach was not supported by the Working Party. Given the fact that the existing secondary legislation already contains a very broad set of provisions on sanctions, the Presidency compromise consolidates these provisions in the basic act. To meet the Commission representatives' concern about sufficient flexibility regarding these provisions, the Presidency suggested to give the Commission **implementing powers** to ensure uniform conditions of their application, where needed.