Special report 14/2012 (2011 discharge): Implementation of EU hygiene legislation in slaughterhouses of countries that joined the EU since 2004

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OBJECTIVE: provision of a Special Report of the Court of Auditors (No 14/2012) on hygiene in the slaughterhouses of new Member States.

CONTENT: Member States acceding to the EU from 2004 had to ensure that their slaughterhouses met the EU's hygiene requirements. As these requirements were generally to a much higher standard than existing national requirements, EU funds were provided to modernise slaughterhouses in order to facilitate their compliance with hygiene requirements. The EU provided around **EUR 117 million** to 241 slaughterhouses under the Sapard programme.

In its audit, the European Court of Auditors examined the use made of these and other funds and whether there were adequate systems to implement the hygiene standards.

The audit included visits to slaughterhouses in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia that benefited from EU funding.

The main message from the audit is that t**he overall design of systems for supervision is that the overall design of systems for supervision of hygiene requirements by the Commission and the competent authorities in the Member States concerned was adequate**. However, the audit revealed a number of weaknesses.

Conclusions of the audit of the Court of Auditors: in its special report, the Court focused on whether the Commission and the Member States concerned took the necessary steps to ensure that slaughterhouses were brought up to the EU hygiene standards. This involved an examination of the supervision, guidance, implementation and funding of measures relating to hygiene requirements.

The audit revealed weaknesses in **the application of the rules and procedures in the Member States visited**. These weaknesses do not call into question the overall design of the systems but demonstrate the need for increased rigour in the application of checks at all levels to mitigate risks and avoid potentially serious problems to food safety.

The implementation of the requirements of the applicable hygiene Regulation was partially reviewed by the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in the Member States. Weaknesses were found in the implementation by Member States of the Multi-Annual National Control Plans (MANCPs). The supervision by national competent authorities did not prevent problems occurring with the implementation of hygiene requirements by food business operators (FBOs).

While the Commission published guidance documents in order to facilitate the implementation of hygiene requirements, some of **the Member States involved did not produce national guidelines**. There was a lack of systematic consultation between the Commission and the Executive Agency for Health and Consumers concerning the initiative and a lack of appropriate procedures in the Member States to disseminate results of the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) initiative.

The contribution of EU funds to facilitating the implementation of hygiene requirements at slaughterhouses was affected by **weaknesses related to the sustainability and selection of projects**.

Recommendations of the Court: in conclusion, the Court recommends that the Commission improves supervision and guidance of hygiene implementation of newly acceding Member States. Considering the use of EU funds for the implementation of the hygiene requirements in those Member States, the Commission is recommended to effectively supervise the implementation of the related programmes and evaluate the impact of these EU funds.