

Products of animal origin, human consumption: safety, controls. Hygiene package

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The Council took note of the progress report on the proposed Regulation laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption and agreed to invite the Committee of Permanent Representatives to continue to work on the dossier in the awaiting of the Opinion of the European Parliament expected in May 2003. Commissioner BYRNE addressed the main outstanding questions to be solved at a political level prior to a further agreement: - relationship with general control rules: the proposal contains specific rules, notably on audits and imports, applied to all products of animal origin; it will apply in addition to the proposal on official feed and food controls; - division of responsibilities : with regard to the respective role of official veterinarians and official auxiliaries concerning specific tasks in abattoirs, Commissioner BYRNE mentioned the possibility of situations where official auxiliaries could operate without the permanent presence of the official veterinarian, on the basis of a case by case approach with an assessment of risks; - involvement of company staff in meat inspections: Commissioner BYRNE reaffirmed the primary responsibility of food business operators for the safety of their products and the possibility for them to carry out certain activities in relation to meat inspection. He noted that such controls by food business operators were already successfully applied in the poultry sector and suggested to extend to other sectors provided that safety requirements are met and that permanent supervision by an official veterinarian is ensured.