Protection of human health: food of animal origin, specific hygiene rules

2000/0179(COD) - 14/07/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a Regulation laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin. CONTENT : the present proposal results from a recast of Community legislation on food hygiene as contained in Council Directive 93/43/EEC on the hygiene of foodstuffs and in a number of Council Directives on public health problems and governing the production and placing on the market of products of animal origin, animal health aspects related to the placing on the market of products of animal origin, as contained in a number of Council Directives that partially overlap with the food hygiene Directives and official controls on products of animal origin contained in the product specific Directives. The recast is primarily motivated by the need to ensure a high level of health protection for the different disciplines concerned. As early as 1964, it was recognised that public health protection with regard to hazards in products of animal origin was regulated in a different way in the different Member States. With regard to meat in particular, health issues were used, justifiable or not, to create and maintain barriers to intra-Community trade and with a view to protecting national markets. The matter was of such a complicated nature and possible health hazards so paramount that it was felt that the only solution to this problem was a full harmonisation of the sector, with the objective to remove barriers to trade whilst ensuring a high level of consumer protection. This resulted in Directive 64/433/EEC on health problems related to the intra-Community trade in fresh meat. The attempt was successful, although it took several years to arrive at a high level and free circulation we know today. The present proposal allows for a common basis in order to simplify the Directives which contain the specific rules. Although these specific rules have helped to maintain a high level of health protection, it must be recognised that they are sometimes unnecessarily complicated and contain repetitions of similar or identical requirements. All these deficiencies contribute to difficulties of interpretation and implementation. The method of simplifying the present hygiene rules for products in animal origin is by recasting the different Directives. This approach is suggested by the observation that a number of procedures and requirements in them are identical, almost identical or similar in nature. By condensing these, a set of rules common to all food can be identified, thus avoiding the repetition, overlap and inconsistencies occurring in the Directive in force. The remaining rules are specific to a particular product, and are kept in product-specific annexes.