Products of animal origin intended for human consumption: organisation of official controls

2000/0180(COD) - 14/07/2000 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a Regulation laying down detailed rules for the organisation of official controls on products on products of animal origin intended for human consumption. 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, official controls on products of animal origin contained in the above product-specific Directives. Requirements for official controls are already laid down for different sectors such as veterinary public health, animal health, food stuffs and animal feed. This sectorial approach has lead to a situation whereby requirements of a similar nature are covered in a different way for the different sectors concerned, or that certain aspects are not covered for a particular sector, thus leaving loopholes in legislation. By way of response to this situation a proposal will be established that lays down the general control principles that must be observed in ensuring that food and feed legislation is complied with. This proposal will cover all aspects related to the official controls for the safety of both feed and foodstuffs and in particular the responsibilities of the official services in the Member States, the action to be taken in the case of risk to the consumer, the training of control officials, the application of contingency plans, controls on imported products, inspections by the Commission, safeguard measures, etc. Although a number of general control requirements can be laid down for all food, it must not be lost of sight that the specificity of certain products requires the setting of specific control requirements. This is in particular the case for products of animal origin, which present hazards that are very specific to the type of commodity. Existing detailed inspection procedures such as ante- and post-mortem inspections on meat are of a very technical nature. Some of these procedures have been implemented for over 30 years without major changes. Although they have proven their effectiveness for controlling diseases such as tuberculosis and glanders, intensive discussions are taking palce to review these traditional inspection procedures so as to address hazards that are linked to the modern methods of food production. These discussions are concentrating in particular on the prevention by modern inspection procedures of food-borne infections such as the ones caused by Salmonella sp., E.coli, Listeria, Campylobacter etc, and on the development of a risk based system for controlling other hazards. In order to enable the Commission to react promptly when these discussions arrive at appropriate results, a separate proposal has been drawn up under which all the detailed inspection procedures are described. While awaiting the result of thescientific assessment, it is proposed that the present rules continue to apply. With regard to the future, when the present proposals are adopted, the Union will have specific food hygiene legislation which ensures a very high standard with regard to public health protection. It will contain a number of important general requirements, some of which will be new for operators and for the monitoring authorities. A follow-up of the implementation of these requirements should be ensured. Also the development of codes to good hygiene practises constitutes an important element in the evolution of food safety. It is therefore proposed that the Commission should closely follow this evolution and make a report on the implementation of the self-checking regimes run by operators, on the establishment of codes to good hygiene practises and on the experience in the Member States with inspections and audits for monitoring the correct implementation of these regimes.