Adaptation of food hygiene rules for products of animal origin

Published by AGRINFO on 10 May 2023; Revised 06 May 2024

Adaptations of some hygiene rules for meat, fish, milk, and eggs

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1141 of 14 December 2023 amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards specific hygiene requirements for certain meat, fishery products, dairy products and eggs

Update

The European Commission has adapted some hygiene rules for on-farm slaughter of small ruminants, transport of carcasses, dry-ageing of meat, cutting or slicing of fishery products, demonstration of heat treatment of milk, and flavouring of eggs.

Impacted products

meat, milk, fish, eggs

What is changing?

Suppliers in non-EU countries must comply with Regulation 853/2004 when exporting animal products to the EU. This obligation is mentioned in the health certificate, signed by competent authorities, that must accompany exported goods (see EU official health certificates for exports to the EU).

The major changes are as follows:

Meat

Mobile slaughterhouses

The new rules clarify how mobile slaughterhouses must be approved in each country where they operate. This includes when they complement permanent slaughterhouses that are also approved.

Slaughter on farm

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- Currently, cattle, pigs, and horses may be slaughtered on farm, with a maximum number per species if limited to stunning and bleeding. The new rules also allow sheep and goats to be slaughtered on farm (maximum of nine) (Annex, 2b2).
- Currently, only livestock that are difficult to transport may be slaughtered on farm. The new rules do not require a specific reason for slaughter (2b).
- Farmed game slaughtered on farm may be transported to a game-handling establishment instead of a slaughterhouse (2e).

Dry-aged meat

Requirements are introduced for dry-ageing of beef, including definition, temperature, humidity, and air flow (2c,i). Dry-ageing of meat of other species is possible if equivalent guarantees are provided on the safety of the meat.

Transport of carcasses

Current rules are changed to allow, under certain conditions, the transport of carcasses and cuts of beef, pork, and sheep before the core temperature reaches 7°C. The methods for testing the surface temperature of such meat are standardised (2c,ii).

Fish

In cases where the temperature of fishery products needs to be temporarily adapted to facilitate slicing or cutting, the change of temperature must be “as short as possible”. The total time of cutting or slicing operations must not exceed 96 hours. Storage and transport are not permitted at that temperature (2f).

Milk from herds not officially free of brucellosis and tuberculosis

When the alkaline phosphatase test is not suitable to demonstrate the effectiveness of heat treatments of milk from these herds, for example for raw milk from non-bovine species, the new rules allow operators to use alternative options based on HACCP principles (2g,i,ii).

Eggs

The flavouring of eggs is permitted, except where it hides any pre-existing abnormal odour of the eggs (2h).

Why?

Food hygiene rules for products of animal origin (Regulation 853/2004, Annexes II and III) are being updated based on practical experience and new scientific advice.

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Timeline

Date of application: **9 May 2024**.

Date of application for dry-aged meat: **9 November 2024**.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

The Regulation opens new opportunities for:

- demonstrating the effectiveness of heat treatments for milk
- flavouring eggs.

It lays down specific conditions for:

- dry-aged meat
- temperature adaptation for slicing and cutting fishery products.

It clarifies that mobile slaughterhouses must be approved in every country where they operate, both within and outside the EU.

Authorities in non-EU countries that export dry-aged meat and fishery products (sliced or cut) must guarantee that animal products exported to the EU comply with the revised Regulation 853/2004 when signing the official certificate.

Recommended Actions

Non-EU country authorities and operators exporting dry-aged meat to the EU must apply the new conditions of production by 9 November 2024.

Background

Under the umbrella of the General Food Law (Regulation 178/2002), Regulation 853/2004 lays down the specific hygiene requirements for foods of animal origin.

EU legislation is amended to adapt to new techniques and the latest scientific knowledge. Changes are decided by the European Commission (the risk manager) in consultation with experts and, when required, based on opinions published by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) (the risk assessor).

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Resources

EFSA (2023) Aged meat not riskier than fresh meat.

Sources

Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1141

Regulation 853/2004

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