# Analytical methods to verify compliance with microbiological criteria

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EU proposes rules on specific methods of laboratory analyses to verify compliance with microbiological hygiene criteria

Draft Commission Implementing Regulation laying down analytical methods applicable to official controls performed for the verification of compliance of food business operators with Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005

## Update

The European Union proposes to establish rules for specific methods of laboratory analyses to be used during official controls to verify compliance with the microbiological hygiene requirements.

## Impacted products

All food

## What is changing?

The EU proposes to define the methods that reference laboratories can use during official controls to verify operators' compliance with the microbiological hygiene requirements laid down in Regulation 2073/2005.

Reference laboratories will be able to use the same methods as operators, that is, the analytical reference methods referred to in Regulation 2073/2005, Annex I, chapter 3. Alternative methods, including proprietary ones, may be used only if they are validated against the analytical reference methods referred to in Annex I, or if they are validated against other internationally accepted scientific protocols.

Proprietary methods must be certified by an independent certification body, and re-evaluated every 5 years (Art. 1.3).


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## Why?

The aim of the proposed regulation is to give official laboratories access to more methods than those currently recognised internationally or by the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) (Art. 34 of the Official Controls Regulation 2017/625).

## Timeline

The Regulation will apply 20 days after it is published.

## What are the major implications for exporting countries?

When checking compliance with microbiological hygiene criteria in Regulation 2073/2005, reference laboratories in non-EU countries will be able to use the methods detailed in the draft.

Reference laboratories that use proprietary methods must ensure that those methods are certified by an independent certification body, and re-evaluated every 5 years.

## Recommended Actions

Feedback on this proposal closed on 2 July 2024.

## Background

The Official Controls Regulation 2017/625 frames the rules for designating official laboratories and performing sampling, analyses, tests, and diagnoses during official controls. It gives the European Commission a mandate to lay down the methods for sampling and for laboratory analyses, tests, and diagnoses [Art. 34.6(a)].

Until this new Regulation comes into application, Art. 34.2 of the Official Controls Regulation applies. Official laboratories can use only methods that comply with relevant internationally recognised rules or protocols, including those of the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN).

## Resources

Regulation No 2073/2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs


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Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products (Official Controls Regulation)

## Sources

Draft Commission Implementing Regulation laying down analytical methods applicable to official controls performed for the verification of compliance of food business operators with Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 [go to Download]

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