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EFSA report on Technical specifications on harmonised epidemiological indicators for public health hazards to be covered by meat inspection of swine

The European Commission requested that European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) provide technical assistance on harmonised epidemiological criteria (indicators) for specific public health hazards in food and animals to be used by risk managers when they consider that the current methods for meat inspection do not adequately address the relevant risks. It is related to the mandate from the Commission for a Scientific Opinion on the public health hazards to be covered by inspection of meat. The first Opinion on meat inspection of swine¹ and the report on Report on technical specifications on harmonised epidemiological indicators for public health hazards to be covered by meat inspection of swine² were published on 20 September 2011. In the scientific report harmonised epidemiological indicators are proposed for food-borne biological hazards to public health that are related to pigs and pork and that can be addressed within meat inspection. These hazards include *Salmonella*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Toxoplasma gondii*, *Trichinella*, *Cysticercus* (*Taenia solium*) and mycobacteria. An epidemiological indicator is defined as the prevalence or incidence of the hazard at a certain stage of the food chain or an indirect measure of the hazards that correlates to human health risk caused by the hazard. The indicators can be used by the European Commission and the Member States to consider when adaptations in meat inspection methods may be relevant and to carry out risk analysis to support such decisions. It is foreseen that the indicators will be used in the pork safety assurance framework proposed by the EFSA Scientific Opinion, particularly to help categorise farms/herds and slaughterhouses according to the risk related to the hazards as well as setting appropriate targets for final chilled carcasses. Depending on the purpose and the epidemiological situation risk managers should decide on the most appropriate indicator(s) to use, either alone or in combinations, at national, regional, slaughterhouse or farm/herd level. It is recommended that risk managers should define the harmonised requirements for the controlled housing conditions of farms. Member States are invited to organise training regarding the implementation of the indicators and the reporting of data generated by the implementation in accordance with Directive 2003/99/EC. The proposed indicators should be regularly reviewed in light of new information and the data generated by their implementation. For some hazards further research is needed on the risk factors and the role of pork as a source of human infection.

¹ European Food Safety Authority; Scientific Opinion of the Panels on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ), on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM), and on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) on the public health hazards to be covered by inspection of meat (swine). EFSA Journal 2011, 9(9):2351, 212 pp.

² European Food Safety Authority; Scientific Report on Technical specifications on harmonised epidemiological indicators for public health hazards to be covered by meat inspection of swine. EFSA Journal 2011; 9(9):2371. 1 pp. Available online: www.efsa.europa.eu/efsajournal