

Inspection of food: monitoring of substances and residues in live animals and meat

1993/1037(CNS) - 22/11/2002 - Follow-up document

This Working Paper from the Commission looks at the implementation of national residue monitoring plans in the Member States. Council Directive 96/23/EC on measures to monitor certain substances and residues in live animals and animal products requires Member States to adopt and implement a national residue monitoring plan for the specific groups of residues. The Directive lays down specific sampling levels and frequencies, as well as the groups of substances to be monitored for each food commodity. National monitoring plans should be targeted: samples should be taken with the aim of detecting illegal treatment or controlling compliance with the maximum residue limits (MRLs) of certain substances. This means that in the national plan, Member States target those groups of animal/gender/age combinations where the probability of finding residues is the highest. This approach is different from random sampling. Member States must forward annually to the Commission the national monitoring plans together with the results of the residue monitoring of the previous year. Annex 1 to this document contains a summary of the results of national residue monitoring plans for the year 2000. Trends within the EU are also indicated where comparison with previous reports is possible. Annex II to this document contains a questionnaire sent by the Commission to Member States to gain information on action taken as a consequence of positive results. The responses of the Member States are discussed. In summary, the term "suspect samples" applies to a sample taken as a consequence of: -positive results and/or -suspicion of an illegal treatment at any stage of the food chain and/or -suspicion of non-compliance with the withdrawal period for a veterinary medicinal product. Some Member States apply these conditions cumulatively, whereas others apply them separately. There is presently no harmonised approach to the definition of suspect samples. The Commission is considering this problem. Positive results for a specific substance/group of substances or a specific food commodity should result in intensified controls in the plan for the following year. Six Member States - Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom - have indicated changes in the plan for 2001 as a consequence of positive results for 2000. This demonstrates that Member States apply flexibility and are willing to change their plans to reflect problems that have arisen. Articles 16 and Articles 22-28 of Directive 96/23/EC prescribe a series of actions (other than modifications of the residue monitoring plan) to be taken in the case of positive results or infringements. The responses of the Member States in relation to these actions are summarised.