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|  | **EUROPEAN COMMISSION****CONSUMERS, HEALTH, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD EXECUTIVE AGENCY****Contract 2013 96 10**Organisation and implementation of training activities on strengthening Member States' response to Union audits under the Better Training for Safer Food initiative |

Invitation to attend BTSF Workshop

CONTROLS OVER POST-SLAUGHTER TRACEABILITY OF MEAT

To be held at FVO, Grange, Ireland on 8-10 dECEMBER 2015

Dear participant

You are invited to attend the BTSF workshop on ‘Controls over post-slaughter traceability of meat’ to be held at the European Commission Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), Grange, Dunsany, County Meath, Ireland from Tuesday 8 to Thursday 10 December 2015.

The workshop is being organised by Food Safety Training Solutions (FSTS) under the European Commission Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) initiative.

**Overall objective**

The overall objective of BTSF training under this contract is to strengthen Member States’ response to FVO audits.

Regulation (EC) No. 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerns official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules. Article 45 of the Regulation requires that Commission experts carry out general and specific audits in Member States. The main purpose is to verify that official controls take place in accordance with multi-annual national control plans and in compliance with Community law.

Audits are carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE).

The **goals** of the workshop are that participants and their respective authorities:

1. take ownership of the findings and conclusions of audit reports on the audits on the topic and use them to improve their official control activities;
2. gain an understanding of good practices in the EU and how they might be adopted in their own situation, possibly with modification to the specific structures and organisation of controls;
3. discuss weaknesses and recurring problems with a view to identifying possible root causes and solutions to remedy or alleviate the problems.

Participants should have sufficient professional experience and responsibility to be in a position to pass on their training to others following the course.

**Background to the workshop**

The FVO is carrying out a project on controls over the post-slaughter traceability of meat. Audits to 13 Member States have been carried out from September 2014 to November 2015, to evaluate the operation of official controls over the traceability of meat (meat of domestic ungulates, poultry, lagomorphs and game meat), minced meat, mechanically separated meat (MSM), meat preparations, meat products, composite products containing meat and other ingredients. Particular attention was paid to the traceability, labelling and identification systems of meat and products, and to the traceability of quantities of each ingredient used. The following common themes and issues were identified during the audits:

Virtually all Food Business Operators (FBOs) have traceability systems in place, but in most cases these are not sufficiently developed or implemented to be considered reliable or comprehensive. This significantly reduces the ability to identify and rapidly recall batches of foodstuffs in the event of an outbreak of human or animal disease. Furthermore it weakens anti-fraud controls and results in misinformation being provided to consumers.

The Member States visited have included the verification of traceability systems in their official controls and audits and they follow an annual control plan with documented procedures. However, the controls were in general only partially effective and many examples were seen of a failure to identify serious systemic deficiencies.

The effective auditing of traceability systems requires particular expertise and can be time-consuming. Most Member States visited had not considered the need for specialist personnel to carry out traceability audits, nor had they allocated sufficient time for the performance of such audits.

Whilst competent authority (CA) staff could not be expected to perform in-depth controls on traceability on a routine basis along with their other tasks, most were not fully familiar with FBO systems in place and were not in a position to identify systemic deficiencies.

Some Member States require internal traceability systems in establishments; others consider it not mandatory based on point III.3.2.ii) of the Guidance document on the implementation of Articles 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19 and 20 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, the General Food Law Regulation.

Controls on traceability systems within FBOs (internal traceability: collation and reconciliation of quantities of meat and ingredients received with the quantities used in production, remaining in store and dispatched) were not well covered. The instructions, guidance and training provided to CA controls staff did not, in general, cover this aspect in most Member States visited.

Where checked in detail, the traceability of cuts of bovine meat was found, in general, to be satisfactory. However, this was not the case for meat from other species and not the case for meat products and preparations.

In addition to controls on the traceability of meat, the audits also covered the use of food additives. While a project specifically covering the controls on the use of food additives is underway (with a number of fact-finding audits scheduled for 2015), and should provide more detailed information on this topic, the audits on traceability have already revealed significant non-compliances in this area, linked to ineffective official controls.

A major component of traceability systems is the labelling of meat and products thereof (including information on other ingredients used) at various stages of production and distribution. The official controls on labelling were, generally, found to be weak and the audits detected non-compliances with FBOs’ obligations. A common finding was the mislabelling of MSM at several stages of the production chain and concerning the use of additives, with resulting mislabelling of products for the consumer.

Instances of the involvement of traders in the distribution chain were identified and these were generally associated with gaps in the documentary record of product. However, their involvement is difficult to quantify as they tend to leave little evidence in the normal documentary chain.

Deficiencies in labelling and traceability records were frequently found even where products were moving between different establishments belonging to the same enterprise.

Notwithstanding the above, a number of examples of good practices were seen in some establishments visited, facilitating traceability of products along the production chain.

These preliminary findings have not yet been presented and discussed with Member States.

**Specific objectives of the workshop**

The objectives of the workshop are to increase and deepen the knowledge of the CAs of the Member States on traceability of meat, meat products and other ingredients and to discuss best practices and methods of control related to this very specific topic. The workshop will present the main findings and conclusions on the series of audits carried out on this topic.

**Target participants**

1. This workshop is targeted at senior competent authority officials at central and regional levels who are involved in policy making, planning of controls and staff training. Participants will be invited from EU Member States and EFTA states.
2. This BTSF event is intended as a training session and will also provide opportunities for peer group discussion. The format is designed to encourage participation and sharing of ideas. Participants will have an opportunity to share their experiences and ideas in the group and plenary sessions.
3. Member State experts from France, Latvia, the Netherlands and Spain will be invited to make presentations on specific topics and to act as tutors in group sessions.
4. Participants should guarantee to disseminate the findings from the workshop on return to their competent authorities. Dissemination methods will be addressed in group discussions and follow-up support will be provided, including the use of web tools.
5. Information packages will be forwarded to participants before the workshop.
6. Please note that the workshop will be conducted in English and interpretation will not be available.

The workshop is being organised by the Food Safety Training Solutions (FSTS) Consortium who will act as facilitators and provide pedagogical support. This will include specific web-based services to enhance communication before, during and after the event.

The outputs of the discussions and other findings will be posted on the web during the event in order to keep participants fully informed of progress made. We therefore suggest that participants who have a laptop or tablet computer should bring it with them to the workshop if possible. A Wi-Fi connection will be available during the workshop sessions and Wi-Fi is also available in the hotel.

**DG SANTE contributors**

The following DG SANTE staff will contribute to the workshop:

Unit G4: Kris de Smet (DG SANTE, Brussels)

Unit F2: Frankie de Dobbelaere, Andre Evers, Jellen Goossens, Liisa Rantamäki , Pauline Stanley, Victor Zamfiresku (FVO, Grange)

The DG SANTE organigram can be found at: <http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_food-safety/chart.pdf>

**Timing**

The workshop sessions will start on Tuesday, 8 December 2015 at 14:30hrs and end on Thursday, 10 December 2015 at 12:30hrs.

Depending on flight schedules to Dublin airport, it is expected that most participants will travel to FVO, Grange, Ireland on the morning of Tuesday, 8 December 2015 and return home on Thursday afternoon, 10 December 2015.

Participants for whom it is not possible to arrange suitable flight connections may have to arrive one day earlier on Monday 7 December, or return one day later on Friday 11 December.

**OUTLINE WORKSHOP AGENDA**

**Tuesday, 8 December 2015, 14:30-17:30**

 ***Afternoon session (including coffee break)***

* Welcome and introductions, FVO and Kenneth Clarke (FSTS), Workshop Chairman
* Legal framework on post-slaughter traceability of meat, including labelling requirements, followed by discussion, Kris de Smet, SANTE Unit G4
* First working group session on selected topics, including:
* Purposes of traceability systems
* Key elements for robust and comprehensive traceability systems
* Where to pay attention during controls on traceability
* What to verify regarding labelling of meat and products thereof
* Best practices, including simplified traceability procedures for small enterprises
* Views on improvements of control systems in place on traceability and labelling
* Practical examples in relation to verification of traceability and labelling requirements

**Wednesday, 9 December 2015, 09:00-17:30**

***Morning session (including coffee breaks)***

* Presentation of main findings and conclusions on audits in the Member States to evaluate the official controls over post-slaughter traceability of meat and products thereof. Followed by discussion, Frankie de Dobbelaere, auditor, Unit F2
* Presentations and discussion of first working group session
* Presentation of a national control system on traceability of meat and products thereof, followed by discussion (Member State contributor from France)
* Improvements to the national control system in a Member State in response to the FVO audit on post-slaughter traceability, followed by discussion (Member State contributor from Latvia)

***Afternoon session (including coffee break)***

* Second working group session (continuing the various topics)
* Presentation of a traceability exercise carried out during an FVO audit in a Member State, findings and lessons learnt, followed by discussion (Member State contributor from Spain)
* Presentations and discussion of second working group session

**Thursday, 10 December 2015, 09:00-12:30**

***Morning session (including coffee break)***

* Modern IT tools for traceability
* Presentation of the Dutch approach on control of labelling of meat and products thereof, followed by discussion. (Member State contributor from the Netherlands)
* Third working group session, followed by presentations and discussion
* Final discussion, concluding remarks and closing of the workshop

**End of workshop, lunch and depart**

Further information and course material will be made available to participants on a dedicated website before the start of the event.

**Social events**

A welcome cocktail party will be held at the hotel on the first evening. FVO staff and course tutors will be invited. This will be followed by dinner for participants.

A three course dinner will be held on the second evening followed by Irish music and entertainment.

**Logistical arrangements**

The Food Safety Training Solutions Consortium (FSTS) led by Agri-Livestock Consultants Ltd (ALC) has been appointed to organise the event and make logistical arrangements. The FSTS contact address is alc.btsf.traceability@gmail.com. Participant arrangements will be made by the ALC-FSTS team, who can be contacted at this address.

The following costs will be paid for participants by FSTS under its contract with the European Commission:

1. Economy class (or equivalent) flights from the nearest convenient airport to Dublin or first-class train or bus travel as appropriate; transfer from and to Dublin airport to the hotel; transfers from the hotel to FVO offices and any visit locations.
2. Travel costs from the participant’s home to the nearest airport/bus station/train station will be covered if requested together with an estimate of the costs. You are expected to travel by public transport wherever possible.
3. Full board accommodation including: room, breakfast, lunch, welcome drinks and dinner.
4. Refreshments during morning and afternoon tea/coffee breaks.

**Travel**

It is anticipated that most participants will arrive at FVO, Grange on Tuesday morning, 8 December 2015. Some participants may need to arrive on Monday, 7 December 2015 if it is not possible to arrange flights on Tuesday morning. Most participants will depart on Thursday 10 December unless it is not possible to arrange flight connections and it is necessary to stay an extra night.

Please note that it usually takes between 45 and 60 minutes to drive from the airport to the FVO offices and the hotel.

**Hotel**

Accommodation will be provided at Trim Castle Hotel, a short coach journey from the FVO offices at Grange:

Trim Castle Hotel, Castle Street, Trim, Co. Meath, Ireland

Telephone: +353 (0)46 948 3000

Email: info@trimcastlehotel.com

Web: <http://www.trimcastlehotel.com/>

**Application to attend the workshop**

Please complete the attached Excel registration form including all required details. Additional information is provided in the attached Word document.

Please send the completed registration form to your national contact point (NCP) for BTSF training with a copy to alc.btsf.traceability@gmail.com.

An up-to-date list of NCPs is available from the website: <http://ec.europa.eu/food/training_strategy/participants/ms_contact_points_en.htm>

FSTS has planned this workshop in close cooperation with the FVO. In some cases the FVO has already contacted officials in Member States and EFTA states about this course.

Depending on the level of interest, we may have places for a second participant from a few countries. We therefore welcome applications from other individuals as well as the first nominated participant in case additional places become available.

**Please complete the attached registration form and send to your National Contact Point (NCP) with a copy to** alc.btsf.traceability@gmail.com by **Friday 6 November 2015**.

Please send your application sooner if possible. This makes it easier for us to find suitable flights according to your requirements.

If you are unable to finalise your application by this date, please let us know and we can discuss your specific arrangements.

Thank you for your cooperation and we looking forward to receiving your application.

David Dewar

Event Manager

FSTS Consortium

alc.btsf.traceability@gmail.com