

Brussels, 22 April 2024
Case No: 88995
Document No: 1449937

Final report

**EFTA Surveillance Authority's follow-up audit to Iceland to evaluate official
controls related to poultry meat and poultry meat products**

from 9 to 14 February 2024

Executive Summary

This report describes the outcome of a follow-up audit carried out by the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) in Iceland from 9 to 14 February 2024.

The objective of the audit was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of measures and actions taken following the audit of the same topic from 25 October to 1 November 2022. Actions and measures taken to address the four open recommendations from the 2022 audit, recommendation nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5, were assessed during this follow-up audit.

The audit team found that good progress had been made since the 2022 audit. Following this follow-up audit, all four outstanding recommendations from the 2022 audit report will be closed on the basis that adequate actions and corrective measures have been taken or are planned by the CA.

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1 Introduction

This hybrid audit took place from 9 to 14 February 2024 (“the 2024 audit”). A remote opening meeting was held on 9 February 2024 and on the spot meetings in Iceland were held on 13 and 14 February 2024. The audit team comprised two auditors from the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA).

The Authority sent a pre-audit questionnaire to the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries (‘the Ministry’) on 18 December 2023 and received a reply (‘the pre-audit document’) on 5 February 2024.

Representatives of both the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (‘MAST’) and the Ministry were present at the remote meeting on 9 February 2024. At the meeting, the audit team confirmed the objectives and itinerary of the audit. The Icelandic representatives provided additional information to that set out in the pre-audit document.

Throughout the audit, a representative of MAST accompanied the audit team.

A final meeting was held at MAST’s office in Hafnarfjörður on 14 February 2024, during which the audit team presented its main findings and preliminary conclusions from the audit.

The abbreviations used in the report are listed in Annex 1.

2 Objectives and scope of the audit

The objective of the audit was to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of measures and actions taken following the audit of the same topic from 25 October to 1 November 2022 (“the 2022 audit”). Actions and measures taken to address the four open recommendations from the 2022 audit, recommendation nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5, were assessed during the 2024 audit.

The findings and conclusions of the audit are based on the information provided in the pre-audit document and documents provided by the competent authorities during the audit. This information was complemented by interviews with competent authority staff, a review of relevant food business operator documentation, interviews with food business operator staff and on-the-spot visits to food business operator establishments.

The assessment was carried out based on, and related to, the EEA legislation referred to in Annex 2 to this report.

Meetings with the competent authorities and visits to food business operator establishments during the audit are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Competent authority meetings and food business operator establishments visited during the audit

	Number	Comments
Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (MAST) and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries	2	An initial meeting and a final meeting between the audit team and the Icelandic competent authorities.
MAST	2	Clarification meetings
Poultry slaughterhouses	2	

3 Legal basis for the audit

The audit was carried out under the general provisions of the EEA Agreement and relevant legislation, in particular Articles 116, 117 and 119 of Regulation (EU) No 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 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 (the OCR), as amended and as adapted to the EEA Agreement by the sectoral adaptations referred to in Annex I thereto.

Legislation relevant to this audit is listed in Annex 2.

4 Background

4.1 Background information

The 2024 audit permitted the Authority to follow up on measures and actions taken by the Icelandic competent authorities to address recommendations from the 2022 audit on the same topic. The final report from the 2022 audit can be found on the Authority's website ([Final 2022 report](#)).

During the 2022 audit, deficiencies in official controls of poultry meat and poultry meat products constituting a significant risk to public and animal health were identified by the Authority. The deficiencies related to the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls, ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection, conditions for carrying out post-mortem inspection and control of animal by-products. The following recommendations to address these shortcomings were issued by the Authority in the final report from the 2022 audit:

- Recommendation No 1: MAST should have procedures and / or arrangements in place to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls;
- Recommendation No 2: MAST should ensure that requirements as regards ante-mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse are in place and carried out before slaughter;
- Recommendation No 3: MAST should ensure that practical arrangements for the post-mortem inspection of poultry are in place and implemented;
- Recommendation No 4: MAST should ensure that post-mortem inspection of poultry is carried out under suitable conditions and in particular that slaughtered animals can be inspected properly;

- Recommendation No 5: MAST should ensure that all food business operators meet their obligations on the control of animal by-products to include the correct labelling and storage of animal by-products.

Based on corrective actions taken and planned by the competent authority, recommendation no 4, related to post-mortem inspection conditions, was closed in February 2023. Immediate corrective actions were proposed for the remaining recommendations, but the Authority took the decision to perform a follow-up audit before any of the remaining recommendations could be closed.

The 2024 follow-up audit was part of the Authority's planned audit programme for 2024.

5 Findings and conclusions

5.1 Recommendation No 1: MAST should have procedures and / or arrangements in place to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of official controls.

1. In reply to the Authority's draft report and follow-up letter from the 2022 audit, MAST confirmed they had, inter alia, employed additional official veterinarians. MAST had also established a new division of Administration and Coordination which would, among other things, harmonize the work of auditors and inspectors and plan additional training for auditors and inspectors.
2. During the 2024 audit, MAST provided evidence they have arrangements in place to verify that existing legal requirements regarding ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection procedures are in place. The audit team saw records of e.g. daily throughputs of poultry slaughtered, official veterinarian time spent on ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection, inspection reports showing date and number of control hours used and the control areas inspected in addition to the total hours spent by official veterinarians in an establishment. According to the pre-audit document, senior veterinary officers have been tasked with monitoring these records to ensure that procedures are correctly implemented.
3. The competent authority are currently developing an on-line registration system for data collection which should make analysis of data related to e.g. hygiene controls, animal welfare and post-mortem findings easier. A presentation on this project was provided to the audit team.
4. The competent authority confirmed that official staff have been trained in relevant areas and there is on-going arrangement for additional training e.g. animal by-products and HACCP and this was verified by the audit team.
5. In addition, the competent authority confirmed that a co-ordination group for staff responsible for delivering risk-based official controls has been established and meets regularly to review and harmonise work procedures.

Conclusions

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| 6. Actions taken and proposed by the competent authority to address Recommendation No 1 are satisfactory and this recommendation can be closed. |
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5.2 Recommendation No 2: MAST should ensure that requirements as regards ante-mortem inspection at the slaughterhouse are in place and carried out before slaughter.

7. In reply to the Authority's draft report from the 2022 audit, the competent authority confirmed that all flocks are subject to ante-mortem inspection. In addition, the inspection manual (LBE-128) was amended to require ante-mortem inspection of each cage in the lairage and inspection of 5% of each flock when suspended on the line prior to slaughter.
8. The competent authority confirmed that a time recording system is in place for official veterinarians to record the time they start ante-mortem inspection and the time they spend doing ante-mortem inspection when birds are suspended on the line prior to slaughter. During the 2024 audit, the audit team verified official veterinarian presence during the hours of slaughter and the availability of food chain information which provides specific animal health and public health information related to the poultry being slaughtered. This was considered satisfactory by the audit team.

Conclusions

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| 9. Actions taken and proposed by the competent authority to address Recommendation No 2 are satisfactory and this recommendation can be closed. |
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5.3 Recommendation No 3: MAST should ensure that practical arrangements for the post-mortem inspection of poultry are in place and implemented.

10. In reply to the Authority's draft report and follow up letter from the 2022 audit, the competent authority confirmed that, from 1 December 2022, arrangements should be in place to ensure all poultry undergo post-mortem inspection by an official veterinarian. In addition, official veterinarian time spent on post-mortem inspection is recorded (see paragraph 2).
11. The competent authority confirmed that following the 2022 audit, they recruited additional official veterinarians and scheduled their attendance in poultry slaughterhouses to ensure 100% post-mortem inspection of poultry by official veterinarians.
12. In response to the pre-audit document for the 2024 audit, the competent authority confirmed they had recently carried out a verification exercise on post-mortem inspection and concluded that, due to staff resource issues, a small percentage of poultry did not get an accurate post-mortem inspection.
13. The audit team verified official veterinarian presence during slaughter and observed that for the first few minutes of production, all poultry did not undergo a post-mortem inspection as the official veterinarians were performing other duties. Thereafter, all poultry were inspected by official veterinarians. The competent authority confirmed this was a temporary issue and they were actively recruiting to address this lack of staff. The audit team were able to verify that a recruitment process was actively in progress.

Conclusions

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| 14. Post-mortem inspection is very much improved from findings during the 2022 audit on the same topic. In addition, the competent authority carried out a verification |
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exercise to ensure that any deficiencies in post-mortem inspection were identified and appropriate corrective measures taken as required. Consequently, actions taken and proposed by the competent authority to address Recommendation No 3 are satisfactory and this recommendation can therefore be closed.

5.4 Recommendation No 5: MAST should ensure that all food business operators meet their obligations on the control of animal by-products to include the correct labelling and storage of animal by-products.

15. In reply to the Authority's draft report from the 2022 audit, the competent authority confirmed that animal by-products issues described in the report were being addressed.
16. During the 2024 audit, the audit team verified that animal by-products training for officials is planned in February 2024. In addition, evidence was presented to demonstrate that risk-based controls covering animal by-products have been carried out in all poultry slaughterhouses. These controls concluded that food business operators were meeting their obligations. At the time of the on-site visits, the audit team verified that animal by-products controls in the establishments were satisfactory.

Conclusions

17. Actions taken and proposed by the competent authority to address Recommendation No 5 are satisfactory and this recommendation can therefore be closed.

6 Overall conclusion

Good progress has been made since the 2022 audit. Following this follow-up audit, all four outstanding recommendations from the 2022 audit report (recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5) will be closed on the basis that adequate actions and corrective measures have been taken or are planned by the competent authority.

7 Final meeting

A final meeting was held on 14 February 2024 at MAST's office in Hafnarfjörður with representatives from MAST and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries. At this meeting, the audit team presented its main findings and preliminary conclusions in relation to which the CAs did not express any disagreement.

Annex 1 - List of abbreviations and terms used in the report

ESA	EFTA Surveillance Authority
EEA	European Economic Area
EEA Agreement	Agreement on the European Economic Area
EU	European Union
MAST	The Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority

Annex 2 - Relevant legislation

The audit takes into consideration all EEA law relevant for the scope of the audit. The following table lists the main legal acts of relevance, as amended and as adapted to the EEA Agreement by the specific and sectoral adaptations referred to in Annexes I and II to that Agreement, but the list may not be exhaustive:

No	EEA Reference	Title
a)	Point 11b of Part 1.1 of Chapter I and Point 31q of Chapter II of Annex I and Point 164 of Chapter XII of Annex II	Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 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, amending Regulations (EC) No 999/2001, (EC) No 396/2005, (EC) No 1069/2009, (EC) No 1107/2009, (EU) No 1151/2012, (EU) No 652/2014, (EU) 2016/429 and (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 1/2005 and (EC) No 1099/2009 and Council Directives 98/58/EC, 1999/74/EC, 2007/43/EC, 2008/119/EC and 2008/120/EC, and repealing Regulations (EC) No 854/2004 and (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Directives 89/608/EEC, 89/662/EEC, 90/425/EEC, 91/496/EEC, 96/23/EC, 96/93/EC and 97/78/EC and Council Decision 92/438/EEC (Official Controls Regulation)
b)	Point 13 in Part 7.1 of Chapter I and Point 41 of Chapter II of Annex I and Point 54zzzc of Chapter XII of Annex II	Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety
c)	Point 16 in Part 6.1. of Chapter I of Annex I and Point 54zzzh of Chapter XII of Annex II	Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs
d)	Point 17 in Part 6.1 of Chapter I of Annex I	Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin
e)	Point 11by in Part 1.1 of Chapter I of Annex I	Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/624 of 8 February 2019 concerning specific rules for the performance of official controls on the production of meat and for production and relaying areas of live bivalve molluscs in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council

f)	Point 11bk in Part 1.1 of Chapter I of Annex I	Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/627 of 15 March 2019 laying down uniform practical arrangements for the performance of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council and amending Commission Regulation (EC) No 2074/2005 as regards official controls
g)	Point 52 in Part 6.2 of Chapter I of Annex I	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 of 5 December 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs
h)	Point 9c in Part 7.1 of Chapter I of Annex I	Commission Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 of 25 February 2011 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down health rules as regards animal by-products and derived products not intended for human consumption and implementing Council Directive 97/78/EC as regards certain samples and items exempt from veterinary checks at the border under that Directive