



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

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Belgium-Luxembourg

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

The Belgian Federal Agency for Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

The Belgian Federal Agency for Food Safety is effective retroactive to January 1, 2000. The agency has 7 specific assignments.

Includes PSD changes: No

Includes Trade Matrix: No

Unscheduled Report

The Hague [NL1], BE

The Belgian Federal Agency for Food Safety

Summary

The February 4, 2000, law relative to the creation of the Federal Agency for Food Safety was published on February 18, 2000, in the Moniteur Belge (Belgian Official Journal). This law entered into force retroactively to January 1, 2000. The exact definition of its assignments must still be specified through a series of royal decrees.

The agency which falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Health will have 7 assignments. These will be extensive as the agency will ensure the control, examination at all stages of the food chain, transportation and storing included, in the public health interest.

It will be responsible for the integration and elaboration of the identification and traceability system. It will have to elaborate and apply a policy of prevention, public-awareness and information, in consultation with the communities and regions. Finally, it will ensure that all legislation concerning food safety will be enforced.

Seven assignments of the Agency

- 1) the control, examination and expertise of food products and their raw materials at all stages of the food chain, in the public health interest;
- 2) the control and expertise of production, processing, preserving, transport, trade, import, and export of food products and raw food material, as well as of the production, processing, packing, trade, storage and sale sites;
- 3) the granting of approvals and authorizations linked to the execution of its mission;
- 4) the integration and elaboration of food products and raw food material identification and traceability systems in the food chain and its control;
- 5) the collection, filing, managing, archiving and spreading of all information relative to its assignment;
- 6) the elaboration and application of a prevention, public-awareness and information policy in consultation with the communities and regions, and;
- 7) the supervision of the legislation observance relative to all links in the food chain.

The Agency advises

The Agency advises the competent authorities on the current and future legislation, including the transposition of the international legislation into Belgian law.

A royal decree will determine, within the context of the agency competencies, the tasks where the agency can be assisted by third parties or the ones which can be executed by third parties, as well as the conditions linked to it.

The competencies of persons, institutions, services and organisms that come within the context of the agency assignments, as well as the rights and duties related to it, are transferred to the agency. Royal decrees will repeal, complete, modify, replace and coordinate the already existing legal dispositions on:

- the traffic of poisonous, soporific, stupefying, disinfectant or antiseptic substances,
- the meat expertise and trade,

- on medicines,
- the expertise and trade in fish, poultry, rabbits and game,
- the protection of the population against dangers resulting from ionizing radiations,
- pesticides and raw materials for agriculture, horticulture, forestry and breeding,
- the fights against organisms harmful to vegetable products,
- the trade in agricultural and horticultural products, and seafood,
- the consumers' health protection as far as food and other products are concerned,
- animal medicinal food,
- the use of substances with hormonal, anti-hormonal, beta-adrenergic or production stimulant effects on animals,
- the animal protection and welfare,
- animal health,
- social and other dispositions,
- the exercise of veterinary medicine.

Measures will be also be taken and decrees will be decided in order to materialize this transfer, to make the agency operational, to avoid competence conflicts, to make the control by the agency on the food chain security and on the food quality the most efficacious possible and to use the available means in the most effective way.

The Consultative and Scientific Committees

A *consultative* committee is instituted by the agency and is in charge of counseling it on its own initiative but also upon the minister's or deputy manager's request concerning all matters relating to the policy followed and to be followed by the agency. This committee is composed in any case of representatives from the federal authority, the regions and communities, consumer associations, and sectors concerned by matters coming under the agency and experts' competence.

A *scientific* committee is also instituted by the agency and is composed of national and international experts in matters coming under the agency competence. This committee examines and gives advices, as much as on its own initiative as upon the minister or deputy manager's demand, on all matters coming under the agency competence and relating to the policy followed and to be followed by the agency. The committee must obligatorily be consulted on all law projects and projects of royal decrees executing laws relating to matters coming under the agency competence.

Contact Point

A permanent contact point is located at the agency where the consumer can obtain objective information and deposit individual claims concerning the food quality and security.

OAA Comment

As a result of the dioxin crisis last year the government of Belgium decided to create an independent agency for food safety. This agency has broad responsibilities ensuring food safety from farmers to consumers.

Previously, the food safety was controlled by a total of five agencies, three from the Ministry of Public Health and two from the Ministry of Agriculture. These are now replaced by one single agency under the authority of the Ministry of Public Health. This, of course, represents a major change for Belgian farmers and food processors.