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Trade Policy Monitoring

Final EC vote ends failed poultry PRT approval procedure

2008

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Report Highlights:

On December 18, 2008, the EU Agricultural Council unanimously, with exception of an abstention from the UK, rejected the proposal to approve Pathogen Reduction Treatments (PRTs) on poultry. This vote marks the final failure of a seven and a half year U.S. attempt to allow PRTs on poultry in the EU, after the new Hygiene Regulation (EC) 853/2004 had approved this HACCP-based sanitary tool in principle in 2004.

This report offers a documented timeline of the EU poultry PRT ban since it was imposed in 1997.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
Brussels USEU [BE2]
[E4]

European Agricultural Ministers unanimous vote against PRT proposal

On December 18, 2008, all EU Member States (MS) except the United Kingdom (UK), which abstained, voted against the proposal for a Council regulation on Pathogen Reduction Treatments (PRTs). This proposal would have approved the use of PRTs under very strict conditions on poultry meat imports, as well as for EU domestic production. On June 2, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoCAH) had already rejected an identical Commission proposal amending the EU's Food Hygiene Regulation to allow the use of PRTs unanimously, with UK abstaining.

The overwhelming majority for rejecting the proposal for the approval of PRTs in poultry is based on the EU food safety paradigm as expressed by German Agriculture Minister Ilse Aigner: "In Europe, we have a different philosophy aimed at avoiding salmonella contamination in poultry throughout our processing." EU food safety strategies rely on strict mandatory food chain controls, while in the United States food safety is secured through science-based safe food production practices. This EU strategy for salmonella reduction through prevention was enshrined in [EU legislation](#)¹ in 2003. The similar program in the United States is the [National Poultry Improvement Plans](#)² (NPIP), implemented in 1994³ and authorized from EU authorities on July 1, 2007⁴. The use of PRTs in U.S. poultry processing became part of industry [HACCP](#)⁵ plans when the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) made HACCP mandatory in 1996.

In plain language, each of the reports below about the merits of PRTs should be read independently. Scientific panels on both sides of the Atlantic have repeatedly failed to find problems with the use of PRTs as practiced by U.S. industry for the reduction of food pathogens in meat processing.

History of over a decade of PRT ban

April 1997: EU Council Directive 97/79/EC, banned the use of PRTs for decontaminating poultry carcasses - http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/1998/l_024/l_02419980130en00310032.pdf

October 1998: EU Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures Related to Public Health (SCVPH) released a report on Benefits and Limitations of Antimicrobial Treatments for Poultry Carcasses. - http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sc/scv/out14_en.pdf

June 2001: USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) submitted a proposal to the European Commission (EC) to consider organic acids, trisodium phosphate and chlorine dioxide as PRTs for poultry. In December 2001, the EC rejected this proposal for insufficiency reasons.

May 2002: Under the "Positive Economic Agenda" adopted by U.S. and EU leaders during the summit meeting, the two sides committed to "work to expeditiously resolve" regulatory issues preventing imports of U.S. poultry into the EU and Spanish Clementine oranges into

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/salmonella/index_en.htm

² http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry/index2.shtml

³ Presentation on the National Poultry Improvement Plan - http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/poultry/downloads/presentations/npip-briefing_files/frame.htm

⁴ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2007/l_151/l_15120070613en00210025.pdf

⁵ http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Science/Hazard_Analysis_&_Pathogen_Reduction/index.asp

the United States. Clementine imports into the United States resumed several months later. U.S. poultry exports to the EU remained blocked.

November 2002: United States submitted to the EU Directorate General Health and Consumer Protection (DGSANCO) technical dossiers documenting the safety of four PRTs for use in U.S. poultry processing plants.

April 2003: SCVPH released an opinion on the evaluation of antimicrobial treatments for poultry carcasses - http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/scv/out63_en.pdf

April 29, 2004: [European Parliament and Council Regulation 853/2004 laying down specific hygiene rules \(corrigendum published in Official Journal L 226\)](#)- specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin (approval of establishments, health and identification marking, imports, food chain information) - entered into force on January 1, 2006. Art. 3 of this Hygiene regulation includes the theoretical use of PRTs. - http://europa.eu/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2004/l_226/l_22620040625en00220082.pdf

Summer/Fall 2004: EU auditors reviewed selected U.S. poultry slaughter establishments. EU requested an Action Plan to address the auditor recommendations. FSIS provided an Action Plan to DG SANCO.

August 2004: USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) submitted the Poultry Export Verification program to the EU. The European Commission (EC) subsequently confirmed that the United States had completed all conditions specified in the Veterinary Equivalency Agreement for reopening poultry trade.

December 2005: The European Food Safety Authority concluded that the four PRTs proposed by the United States are safe in their report: EFSA-Q-2005-002 Assessment of the toxicological risks resulting from possible reaction products of antimicrobial substances applied on poultry carcasses (AFC) http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178620765475.htm

February 2006: DGSANCO circulated a draft regulation to authorize use of poultry PRTs to stakeholders.

September 2006: DGSANCO finalized amendment of draft regulation to approve use of PRTs for poultry carcasses. Commission interservices review of draft regulation begins.

Fall 2006 – Spring 2007: Commissioner of Agriculture placed a hold on draft regulation.

Summer 2007: The Directorate General Environment (DGENVI) raised new questions about use of PRTs in EU.

September 2007: DGENVI and DGSANCO ordered two new scientific studies to be conducted to assess impact of PRT use in EU on environment and the development of antibiotic resistance.

March 6, 2008: EFSA released its Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ): Assessment of the possible effect of the four antimicrobial treatment substances on the emergence of antimicrobial resistance - http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178697425124.htm

March 12, 2008: Scientific Committee on Health and Environmental Risks (SCHER) released its opinion on Environmental impact and effect on antimicrobial resistance of four substances

used for the removal of microbial surface contamination of poultry carcasses - http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scher/docs/scher_o_081.pdf

April 2, 2008: Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks released its Opinion on Environmental impact and effect on antimicrobial resistance of four substances used for the removal of microbial surface contamination of poultry carcasses - http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihhr/docs/scenihhr_o_015.pdf

April 2008: The scientific opinions from EFSA, SCENIHR and SCHER are received by the Commission as of April 2008. The EFSA opinion is generally considered to be positive and the joint SCENIHR and SCHER opinion is inconclusive.

May 13, 2008: At the second meeting of the Trans-Atlantic Economic Council (TEC), the European Commission states that, before the EU-U.S. Summit in June, it will propose changes to EU regulations that will allow the importation of poultry meat processed using pathogen reduction treatments. - <http://useu.usmission.gov/Article.asp?ID=63161451-5486-4ADD-863B-91665FA846C2>

June 2, 2008: A Commission proposal amending the EU's Food Hygiene Regulation to allow the use of PRTs was put to vote to the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH), which rejected it proposal almost unanimously (point 18A). - http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/sum_0203062008_en.pdf

June 19, 2008: The European Parliament (EP) adopted a resolution calling on the Council to reject the Commission's proposal to authorize four antimicrobial treatments for poultry carcasses for human consumption. Out of a total of 785 Members of Parliament (MEP), 526 MEPs voted in favor of the resolution, 27 voted against and 11 abstained. - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B6-2008-0309&language=EN>

July 9, 2008: EFSA Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ): Food borne antimicrobial resistance as a biological hazard - http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902034881.htm
While this report doesn't cover PRTs, it may still have some relevance.

October 29, 2008: The college of Commissioners adopted the [Proposal for a Council Regulation as regards the use of antimicrobial substances to remove surface contamination from poultry carcasses](#) - <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st15/st15214.en08.pdf> . The text is the same as the one that was rejected by the standing committee (SCoFCAH) last June except that it is now a Proposal for a Council Regulation. The Commission forwarded the proposal to the Council secretariat on November 4.

November 4, 2008: Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks SCENIHR preliminary report on Effects of the Active Substances in Biocidal Products on Antibiotic Resistance -

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_risk/committees/04_scenihhr/docs/scenihhr_o_020.pdf

December 12, 2008: At the third TEC meeting in Washington DC, European Commissioner Verheugen acknowledges that the EC has been impotent in making any progress in the poultry PRT approval dossier and has given up.

December 18, 2008: The [Agriculture and Fisheries Council of December 18 and 19](#)⁶ unanimously rejects a [proposal for a Regulation on the removal of surface contamination from poultry carcasses](#) - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0430:FIN:EN:PDF>

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Related reports from USEU Brussels with info on EU policies:

Report Number	Title	Date Released
E48090	Poultry and Products - Annual	09/02/2008
E48081	Update on the EU Pathogen Reduction Treatment approval process	07/31/2008
E48067	EP resolution calls for Council to reject EU Commission PRT proposal	06/19/2008
E48066	EC proposal amending poultrymeat marketing regulation	06/24/2008
E48040	EU Scientific Opinions on Poultry PRT's show no drawbacks	04/11/2008
E47039	EU opens poultry TRQ for the United States	05/25/2007
E35166	Analysis of US poultry meat trade with the EU: Past, present, future	08/29/2005
E23111	Poultry Decontamination	06/20/2003

These reports can be accessed through our website <http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/> or through the FAS website <http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/attacherep/default.asp>.

⁶ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/fr/agricult/104918.pdf

- Only French version of the Council meeting report available yet.