Vietnam responds to the European Commission on residues

Numbers of rapid alerts for non-compliant levels of veterinary residues in fishery products from Vietnam were higher than usual during much of 2014. Late in 2014 the European Commission requested the Vietnamese authorities to provide full details of the measures and corrective actions undertaken in the establishments concerned. The Commission has reported that they have received an official response from the Vietnamese authorities, and they are now assessing this response. No decision has yet been taken on whether further action is necessary by the Commission.

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EU and Vietnam hold eleventh round of FTA talks

The EU and Vietnam have completed the eleventh round of negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The talks were held in Brussels, on 19–23 January 2015. In this round, talks focused in particular on services, investment, government procurement, competition related aspects, and regulatory issues, including fishing. Both teams made further progress on all outstanding issues and are working towards a swift conclusion of the negotiations.

The Commission’s web page on EU–Vietnam trade relations is here.

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DG MARE questionnaire: New Regulation on autonomous tariffs quotas for certain fishery products to Union processors from 2013 to 2015

EU Council Regulation 1220/2012 on the “Autonomous Tariffs Quotas–ATQs” reaches the end of its validity on 31 December 2015. The EC will soon start the preparatory works with a view to present a proposal to the Council by mid-2015. The Commission is
therefore seeking to collect the views of the Member States and EU organisations producing, processing or marketing fishing and aquaculture products.

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**Bid to reverse Sri Lanka red card**

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera was in talks with the Commission last month in a bid to reverse the EU's import ban on Sri Lankan caught fishery products. According to the Sri Lankan press, the Sri Lanka authorities are expecting a visit from EU experts to review the country's anti-IUU measures. Parliament will be amending the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act to impose heavy fines on those violating deep sea fishing regulations.

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**EU Updates**

**Discussions on relaxing PAH limits for specific products**

In addition to reductions in polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) limits to certain local traditionally smoked seafood products, the European Commission has also been considering the situation with katsuobushi. Katsuobushi is a heavily smoked and dried traditional Japanese fish product used for stock and seasoning. Because compliance with the new lower PAH limit for smoked fishery products has been shown to be difficult, discussions have been taken place with a view to retaining higher limits specifically for this product. Also under consideration is the broadening of the “smoked sprats” category to include small smoked herring, since these species are an important Latvian national product and are canned interchangeably dependent on season and availability.

Information on contaminant legislation is available on the Seafish website [here](http://www.seafish.org/industry-support/legislation/updates/monthly-newsletters).

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**Dioxins and PCBs in Baltic salmon and herring**

The European Commission is still concerned about the possibility of fish from the Baltic that is non-compliant with the limits for dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) entering the open market. Additional safeguarding measures are under discussion in the Commission’s Standing Committees, but member states from the Baltic region have yet to reach agreement. Therefore, although the selling of Baltic salmon and herring is
not illegal, food businesses are again reminded to ensure that it is compliant with the limits set out in Commission Regulation 1259/2011.

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Labelling

The Food Information to Consumers came into effect from 13/12/14, the Commission working group met to discuss and agree some outstanding issues in its Q+A.

Defra have confirmed the Commission legal services have considered the issue of "the indication of the net weight for glazed foods" and the issue of "the date of freezing or the date of first freezing in cases where the product has been frozen more than once [...]".

For your information, following the opinion of the Legal Services, the Commission's position on these two points is the following:

1. Under the Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011, it is not allowed to declare the weight of the glazed food inclusive of the glaze (total/gross weight), in addition to the indication of the net weight exclusive of the glaze.

2. The date of first freezing referred to in Annex III, point 6 of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 corresponds to the date on which the carcass of meat, meat or fish used as raw materials for the production of the final product have been frozen for the first time.

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Question for written answer Implementation of the regulations on labelling by SMEs

1. Is the Commission aware of the report stating that a quarter of companies in the Netherlands are unable to implement the regulations relating to labelling before the deadline of 13 December?

2. Is the Commission able to state whether this is also the case in other European countries?

3. How does the Commission intend to support or facilitate small businesses in order to enable them to implement the regulations on time?

Answer given by Mr Andriukaitis on behalf of the Commission

Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers[i] was adopted in 2011. To enable food business operators to adapt the labelling of their
products to the new requirements introduced by the regulation, the legislators considered it important to provide for an appropriate transitional period of three years for the application of this regulation, with the exception of the provisions on the mandatory nutrition declaration for which an appropriate transitional period of five years was foreseen. The three-year transitional period for the general provisions of Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 expired on 12 December 2014.

The Commission is not aware of the report mentioned by the Honourable Member, nor is it aware of the state of readiness of food business operators to comply with the new rules in other Member States. The enforcement of the Union legislation is entrusted with the national competent authorities.

Since the adoption of the regulation, the Commission has been meeting on a regular basis with experts from Member States in the context of the working Group on the Food Information to Consumers. Various questions and interpretation issues raised by the food business operators and Member States have been discussed in order to ensure harmonised understanding and implementation of the regulation. In the context of this working practice, the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety has developed a Questions and Answers document, which is, since January 2013, published on its website and will be soon updated. The purpose of this document is to assist all players in the food chain, including small businesses, as well as the competent national authorities to better understand and correctly apply Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011.