



# ANNUAL REPORT ON THE SINGLE INTEGRATED MULTIANNUAL NATIONAL CONTROL PLAN

## Executive Summary 2018

### 1. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS

#### • RESULTS OF MAIN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

**The Directorate has set high level strategic objectives, in particular** to ensure that there is a comprehensive and integrated system of official controls from 'farm to fork' which contributes to protecting public and animal health and safeguarding consumer interests, to promote the welfare of animals and protect the interests of the wider economy environment and society by preventing, controlling and eradicating disease, and to encourage international trade.

The Directorate moved towards achieving these high level strategic objectives **by setting operational objectives**

#### • Strategic:

- 1) **Reduction of food borne illness by monitoring and reduction the incidence of *Salmonella* sp in Poultry flocks.**

The aim of the Salmonella National Control Plan ( SNCP) is to monitor and control zoonotic *Salmonella* infection in *Gallus gallus* flocks (broilers and laying hens) according to provisions laid out in Commission Directive 2160/2003. Over 700 samples were tested .

#### • **Broiler Flocks**

342 flocks of broiler were tested under the SNCP. Three positive broiler flocks out of a total of 342 were found in 2018 and the Serovar isolated was Monophasic *Salmonella typhimurium*.

- **Layer Flocks**

There were 7 laying flocks positive for the targeted serovars out of a total of 95 flocks. The prevalence in 2018 of *Salmonella Enteritidis* and *Salmonella Typhimurium* has experienced an increase over the last year. The prevalence increased from 2.3 to 6.32 (considering all flocks, rearing and adults). This was due to an increased number of official tests which was carried out in order to take drastic measure for improving the sector.

## **2) Prevention, Controls and disease eradication**

Laboratory analyses of samples have been carried out according to the exigencies of the monitoring/control and eradication for a number of animal diseases as required by the Animal Health Unit.

**Bovine tuberculosis:** Controls were carried out in all dairy farms through a skin test. 10189 tests on bovine animals were performed on dairy farms in the Maltese Islands. All bovine and caprine were tested negative to the intradermal comparative skin test for Tuberculosis except 3 bovines that resulted positives and 2 bovines that had a doubtful reaction 2 consecutive times. All positive and doubtful reaction were detected in 3 farms. All dairy farms were considered officially TB free at the end of 2018, and were visited at least once a year.

All bovine and caprine animals on Non-dairy farms tested negative, as there were no reactors.

**Brucella reactors:** No ruminants tested positive to the Brucellosis in dairy farms. As regards non-dairy farms, all ovine and caprine that gave a positive reaction to the Rose Bengal Test (screening test) resulted negative in the confirmatory test.

During 2018 no cases of **leucosis** were found on dairy farm or on non-dairy farms sampled in the Maltese Islands.

**This high strategic target has been partially met**

### **Operational**

- 1) To set up official control programmes on establishments requiring approval from the Veterinary Regulation Directorate, based on a risk categorisation of these establishments and with appropriate frequency.**

The risk assessment has been followed up and it reduced burden on all stakeholders involved.

**The administrative objective target has been met.**

- 2) To digitalise all official control programmes on establishments requiring approval from the Veterinary Regulation Directorate. Checklists, risk categorisation and score-**

**point system to be included based on a risk categorisation of these establishments and with appropriate frequency.**

During 2018, the checklists used for official controls were digitised into “Self-assessment forms” for all FBOs falling within its remit. These forms are intended to facilitate compliance with legislative requirements, such as the hygiene package regulations, prior to actual inspection. All data input, including verification of self-assessment Forms will be done online, and the system will be introduced to the FBOs via seminars in early 2019, using a staggered approach in relation to the Approved activity in question.

**The administrative objective target has been met.**

## **2) To improve controls at border and in particular on transit and transshipments**

A total of 640 consignments for total of 2231 containers were in transshipments and were checked by the Section

**The administrative objective target has been met.**

## **3) Reduction of FBO non compliances**

In general, and from the tables present in the relevant section of the report, the number of enforcement actions have remained stable and only slightly increased from last year. The enforcement actions were taken on varied business types, and reflect the overall increase in official controls on approved establishments.

## **4) To verify that Official Controls are consistent and meet the target of 882/2004**

Within the Veterinary Regulation Directorate there is an internal audit system developed and implemented in line with provisions of Article 4(6) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. Audits are implemented according to the instructions provided by the Food Safety Commission, a public entity which is legally required to carry out internal audits on the CAs in terms of Regulation (EC) 882 of 2004 on official. The internal audits carried out included the Poultry Section within the **Animal Health Unit** on Salmonellosis control programme; an internal audit on **Feeding stuffs and animal nutrition section** to evaluate the control procedures; and an internal audit on the **National Residue Control Plan** on the implementation of the National Residue Control Plan. The audits planned on Veterinary Medicine and Animal Nutrition Section were not carried since the Chief Executive auditor considered more effective and valuable to postpone the audit in view of the upcoming entry into force of the national legislation of veterinary medicinal products.

Internal audits were well received, with constructive discussions and positive outcomes observed and reported during the audits. A continuous improvement of the capacity to reach the targets defined in the Annual National Control Plan with a good organization of the activities and a definition of more detailed standard operational procedures was recommended to strengthen the implementation of such activities. Weaknesses were still documented in the resources available for VRD for implementing the official control and related activities.

**5) To improve further collaboration with other competent authorities and especially with the Environmental Health Directorate.**

Joint inspections has been performed to prevent fraudulent or illegal activities including monitoring of illegally imported/traded food and feed. A number of enforcement actions have been carried out. A specific taskforce has been created and a memorandum of understanding has been drafted with the various competent authorities in order to further improve the controls.

**The objective has been met**

**6) To improve the welfare of the animal on farm.**

The emergency on farm system has worked on 24/7 basis throughout the year providing a very effective tool for the farmers who have managed to reduce distress to animals that had to be put down on farm.

**The objective has been met.**

**7) To monitor and control, in line with EU AW legislation efficacy of slat system**

The Directorate has started monitoring at farm level as well as during ante-mortem podal lesions Official veterinarians have monitored podal lesions at ante mortem as part of the department key performance indicators. This program started in 2012 and become fully operation in 2013; it helps providing information to officials monitoring animal health and welfare at pigs' farm level. When we look at the table a decrease in number of animals affected is evident.

	2018	2018	2017	2017	2016	2016	2015	2015	2014	2014
	<u>Sows &amp; boars</u>	<u>Sows &amp; boars</u>	<u>Sows &amp; boars</u>	<u>Fatteners</u>	<u>Sows &amp; Boars</u>	<u>Fatteners</u>	<u>Sows &amp; Boars</u>	<u>Fatteners</u>	<u>Sows &amp; Boars</u>	<u>Fatteners</u>
Total lesions	13	9	24	18	19	19	33	18	19	64
Number of affected farms			15(1)	12(3)	15	17	12	24	15	34
% of farms			<b>15.3</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>23.8</b>	<b>13,9</b>	<b>31,5</b>

**The objective has been met**

**2. KEY DATA ON CONTROLS**

• **SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN RELATION TO MAIN PRIORITIES:**

- 1) Reduction of salmonella positivity. The prevalence of *Salmonella Enteritidis* and *Salmonella Typhimurium* has experienced an increase over the last year. The prevalence increased from 2.3 to 6.32 (considering all flocks, rearing and adults). This was due to an increased number of official tests which was carried out in order to take drastic measure for improving the sector.

- 3) The reoccurrence of bovine **tuberculosis** in the Maltese island, which was first detected in 2017 with a second positivity in 2018, is a matter of concern as the last occurrence is dated back in 2001 and the country has obtained in 2016 the Tuberculosis official free status. The AHU has planned controls on farms for regaining the health status

- » MAIN TRENDS IN INTENSITY AND TYPE OF CONTROLS

### **Safety of the Food Chain**

#### Approved Food establishments

Category of Establishment	Audits	Audits for Approval	Inspection Un/Announced	FollowUp	Generic Visit	Preliminary discussions with New Applicants	Sampling	Enforcement	Other	Total Official Controls
<b>Cold Stores (Section 0)</b>	21	11	9	5	0	9	0	7	3	<b>65</b>
<b>Cutting/De boning (Section 1)</b>	9	3	9	4	0	7	0	2	2	<b>36</b>
<b>Poultry/La gomorphs (Section 2)</b>	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	<b>7</b>
<b>Mince Meat/Meat Preps (Section 5)</b>	10	4	12	3	0	10	0	5	4	<b>48</b>
<b>Meat Products (Section 6)</b>	7	4	13	5	0	8	0	4	15	<b>56</b>
<b>Fishery Products (Section 8)</b>	5	8	10	0	2	0	10	5	12	<b>52</b>
<b>Raw Milk &amp; Dairy (Section 9)</b>	1	5	2	0	0	4	0	1	4	<b>17</b>
<b>Exclusive Re-Wrapping/ Re-Packing</b>	11	5	13	5	0	1	0	6	0	<b>41</b>
<b>Eggs and egg products (Section 10)</b>	0	0	4	0	3	1	2	1	13	<b>24</b>
<b>Other</b>	3	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	68	<b>75</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>421</b>

**Cheeselets: Number of newly approved *gbejna* production rooms/establishments in 2018:**

<b>Traditional – cheeselets ( Ġbejna )</b>	
Approvals Malta:	27
Approvals Gozo:	11
<b>Non-traditional- Establishment (Cheeselets are: Pasteurized/different-milk-species with flexibility as classified as small industry)</b>	
Approvals Malta:	1
Approvals Gozo:	1
Total end of 2018 new approvals	39
Total published by the end of 2018-including-previous-approved establishments:	47

TDU = Traditional Dairy Unit

**Animal Feed**

Official Control ( 40 inspections and 9 audits) were carried out in 2018. Feed businesses: 21 were newly-registered.

**Vet Med**

<b>Operator</b>	<b>No. of Inspections</b>
Veterinary Wholesale dealers	5
Veterinary Pharmacies	8
Research Facilities	2
Farms	13
Shops	1
Pet Shops	5

**Animal Welfare**

Meetings/ Training	Farm inspections	Male Bovines (not for milk)	Called to witness	AAC Meetings	Reports on animal welfare	Boarding/Kennel Inspections	Zoo or illegal zoo inspection	Pet shops inspections	Sanctuary Inspection
20	56	15	7	47	17	3	13	51	8

## **Animal Health**

\*see annual report

<b>Tuberculosis</b>	<b>Brucellosis</b>
Bovines	Bovines
10,189	9640

**Tuberculosis reactors:** All bovine and caprine were tested negative to the intradermal comparative skin test for Tuberculosis except 3 bovines that resulted positives and 2 bovines that had a doubtful reaction 2 consecutive times. All positive and doubtful reaction were detected in 3 farms.

### **3. TREND ANALYSIS OF NON-COMPLIANCE**

- **STATEMENT OF OVERALL TRENDS IN COMPLIANCE:** FBO in the food sector are generally compliant with regards to the application of traceability and structural requirement vis a vis regulation 852 and 853/2004
- **MAIN TYPES OF NON-COMPLIANCE:**  
Based on the reports gathered during 2018 when performing official controls in the food, feed and in the primary production sectors the most typical noncompliance continues to be failure to comply with adequate maintenance programs.  
Other typical non-compliances include:
  - Inadequate record-keeping, especially HACCP-related.
  - Failure to implement effective cleaning schedules.
  - Incorrect frequencies in relation to microbiological sampling plans
  - Incorrect parameters in relation to microbiological testing, including also excessive testing for non-statutory parameters for process hygiene criteria and food safety criteria, sometimes concomitant with non-testing of statutory requirements.
- **UNDERLYING CAUSES:** limited business opportunities and high production costs give little money to FBO to invest in appropriate testing and maintenance programs.
- In farms and some micro-businesses, problems are related to the very low FBO schooling level.
- Difficulties of using TRACES; rejection of containers was due to failure of physical checks, documental checks and temperature

### **4. ENFORCEMENT TRENDS: ACTIONS TAKEN IN CASES OF NON-COMPLIANCE**

#### **Red meat section:**

3 Corrective Action Requests (CARs) were issued to Red Meat slaughterhouses and Cutting deboning plant. Another enforcement action was in relation to poultry slaughterhouse.

#### **Approved Establishments section:**

There were 34 enforcement actions, mostly ranging from written reports to Corrective Action Requests (CAR). Non-compliances were mainly related to Cold Chain recording deficiencies; general structural maintenance; and HACCP related records.

### **White Meat Plants:**

1 corrective action was issued

### **NVL Unit (Medicines)**

4 warning letters were sent to stakeholders.

### **Trade Unit BIP**

A total 1415.74 kg of products seized, between POAO brought by passengers at airport and POAO found on parcels. Personal imports through MIA were 1389.4kg, and through post parcels were 26.34kg.

All POAO sized were disposed of by incineration. 840kg of ship waste from third countries was disposed of by incineration.

### **Animal Welfare Section:**

5 court proceedings were initiated and 4 warning letters were sent during 2018

### **Animal Identification**

Enforcement actions drastically decreased; a full breakdown is contained in the MANCP annual report

## **5. NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF AUDITS:**

NUMBER OF AUDITS AND SECTORS COVERED:

The following internal audits have been carried out:

- **Animal Health Unit – Poultry Section**

Follow up audit on Salmonellosis control programme.

- **Feeding stuffs and animal nutrition section**

The main target of this audit was to go through the control procedures planned by the section and undertaken during inspection activities and ascertain whether said procedures are suitable to reach the expected targets and if they are followed in a proper way.

- **National Residue Control Plan**

- **Results 2018**

Internal audits were well received by the audited staff of VRD and constructive discussions were carried out and positive outcomes observed and reported during the audits.



As general outcome of the audits carried out, it was identified that most of the recommendations issued were closed. The internal audits identified a continuous improvement of the capacity of the VRD to reach the targets defined in the Annual National Control Plan with a good organization of the activity and a definition of more detailed standard operational procedures.

Improvements on the capacity to define standard operational procedures have been identified in each section audited although weaknesses were still documented in the collaboration between different Sections of the VRD.

**The National Veterinary Laboratory** conducted the following audits:

- 6 technical audits and 4 audit covering ISO 17025 requirements

## **6. RESOURCES**

- «SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ALLOCATION OF  
i. **FUNDING FOR PROGRAMMES:**

The programmes approved for co-financing for 2018 are:

1. Salmonellosis(zoonotic salmonella)in laying and broiler flocks of *Gallus gallus*
2. AMR- Anti Microbial Resistance

### **ii. STAFF:**

The following were the new recruits: 6 Veterinary Support officers, and a further 6 staff members were employed with the NVL and Veterinary Medicinals section.

## **7. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF CONTROL AUTHORITIES**

### LEGISLATION

-SL 439.21 Keeping of Dogs (Regulation)

-The transposition of EU Directive 91/412/EEC was published as Legal Notice Number 3 of 2018. This can be found as Subsidiary Legislation S.L437.108 on Good Manufacturing Practice for Veterinary Medicinal Products Rules.

- TRAINING

- 1) VRD focused on a series of trainings aimed at disseminating information after BTSF training was carried out.
- 2) A simulation exercise has been organized on the 19.10.2018 in order to train the staff of Animal Health Unit (using to train the trainer approach), verify the procedures indicated in the contingency plan as well as the contingency material present in the store
- 3) Retraining of TRACES system use.
- 4) In line with ISO17025 the National Veterinary Laboratory carried out the following:
  - CFT training for Brucellosis Diagnosis carried out at EU RL in France
  - The Technical Manager and the Quality Managers followed training on Internal Audit organised by the National Accreditation Body in Malta

In line with ISO17025 the National Veterinary Laboratory carried out the following trainings:

<b>Test</b>	<b>No of officers trained</b>	<b>Number of training sessions</b>
Quality Control AMR Protocol	2	1
Media Quality Control	2	1
Calibration of balances	8	1

- 5) The Trade section has participated actively to the experts meetings and the SCOPAFF and Expert meeting on Import Controls held in Brussels through all year 2018. Trainings have been followed by the Veterinary Officers of the BIP during the year 2018 most of them organised by the BTSF

## **8. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF FOOD BUSINESS OPERATORS**

### TRAINING PROGRAMMES:

- Training on the Salmonella programme was organized for farmers of Broilers and Layers.