

Reform of Entry Controls and inspection in the area of food and veterinary supervision in Latvia

Ernests Zavadskis

Tirana, Albania

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Why reform?

Background (in late 1990s)

Several ministries involved in policy elaboration and drafting of legislation:

- Ministry of Welfare (food safety criteria, general hygiene requirements)
- Ministry of Agriculture (specific hygiene requirements for agricultural products of animal and plant origin,)
- Ministry of Economics (labeling)
- Ministry of Finance (excised goods)

Why reform?

Several inspection institutions responsible for food safety control supervised by:

Ministry of Agriculture:

- State Veterinary Service (raw materials and products of animal origin)
- Sanitary Border Inspection (veterinary border control)
- Plant production State Quality Control Service (products of plant origin)

Why reform?

Ministry of Welfare:

- State Sanitary Inspection (food safety at retail and catering, production of beverages, bottled drinking water and mixed products)
- Public Health Agency (investigation of food borne diseases outbreaks)

Ministry of Economics

- Consumer Rights Protection Center (consumer complains)

Independent Conformity assessment centers (inspection within conformity assessment scheme)

Why reform?

Mentioned above resulted in:

- Unclear supervision structure and sharing of responsibilities
- Overlapping or absence of control
- Different criteria for carrying inspection, taking samples and training of inspectors
- Fragmental analysis of inspection data

Why reform?

- Chaotic crisis management
- Several laboratory networks
- Administration costs for management of numerous institutions involved
- Poor dialog between control institutions “blaming on each other” and food business operators

Why reform?

Other factors that influenced decision makers:

Political pressure due to enlargement process:

National program for integration in the European Union-

- transposition and implementation of legislation,
- upgrading of food establishments
- strengthening official food control

Why reform?

EC regular monitoring reports on Latvia's preparations for membership:

- Full and effective enforcement of the internal market control systems as a necessary condition

Pressure from industry side:

- willingness to trade with EU member states
- dissatisfaction with existing food control system

Pressure from consumers:

- difficult to identify competent authority in a case of complains

How to reform?

Decision on **governmental level** to establish a unified service
(April 2001)

Set up of **interministerial** working group

Working group report with proposals on:

- dividing of policy making responsibilities and transferring of surveillance functions to the Ministry of Agriculture
- inventory and proposals for changes in legislation and annual budget for ministries and institutions involved (September 2001)

How to reform?

Establishment of Food and Veterinary Service on the basis of the State Veterinary Service

(operational since 1 January 2002)

Transitional period for merging of institutions and overtaking of responsibilities and staff up to April 2002

Results of reform

- Clear division of responsibilities between institutions involved in official food and veterinary control
- Establishment of Food Council as an intersectoral institution for co-ordination of elaboration and supervision of implementation of state policy on official food control (chairman-minister of Agriculture)
- Establishment of Food and Veterinary Service - united competent authority with clear structure and responsibilities, supervised by Ministry of Agriculture

Results of reform

Surveillance according to concept “from stable to table”:
all food chain covered

Flexibility and quick response in emergency cases

Improved dialog with NGO and public awareness raised

Rational use of resources available

Results of reform

Transparency of FVS activities:

- surveillance and laboratory control programs are accepted by Food Council and approved by Minister of Agriculture (are available on Internet)
- Guidelines (SOP) on inspection and sampling, uniformed inspection reports
- Specified inspection frequency for certain type of establishments

Results of reform

Comprehensive computerized database due to mandatory registration of all food business operators (available on Internet)

Quality assurance system introduced

Appropriate training for food inspectors provided

Annual report on FVS activities (available on Internet)