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FINAL
REPORT OF A MISSION
CARRIED OUT IN
THAILAND
FROM 21 FEBRUARY TO 3 MARCH 2005
CONCERNING THE EXPORT OF COOKED POULTRY MEAT PRODUCTS
AND THE CONTROL
OF THE AVIAN INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Comments provided by the Thai authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic type to the relevant parts of the report



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1. INTRODUCTION¹

The mission took place in Thailand from 21 February to 3 March 2005. The mission team consisted of three inspectors from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and two Member State experts and was undertaken in the framework of the FVO mission programme for 2005.

2. MISSION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE²

The objectives of the mission were:

- to evaluate the application of the provisions of Commission Decision 2004/122/EC³ granting to Thailand derogations to export cooked poultry meat products to the EU;
- to gather information (fact finding) on: the current Avian Influenza (AI) epidemic in the country, the measures taken and planned by the Competent Authority (CA) to control the disease, and in particular on the vaccination and compartmentalisation issues.

In pursuit of these objectives:

- an opening meeting was held on 21 February 2005 with the representatives of the Central Competent Authority (CCA) - the Department of Livestock and Development (DLD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. At this meeting, the inspection team confirmed the objectives of the mission and requested additional information to ensure the satisfactory completion of its tasks;
- in addition, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
CA	Central	1	Operations Centre ("war room") and DLD headquarters in Bangkok
	Regional	1	Pathumthani regional office
	Provincial	1	Pitsanuloke
	District	2	Nakornthai, Prompiram
Laboratories	Central	1	National Institute of Animal Health (NIAH) in Bangkok
	Provincial	1	Reg. Vet Research and Development centre in Pitsanulocke
CONTROL SITES			
Farms		5	3 broilers, 1 laying hens, 1 fighting cocks
Border Posts (check points)		2	
Processing establishments		5	
Slaughterhouse		1	
Quarantine stations		1	

- the inspection team was accompanied throughout the whole mission by representatives of DLD.

¹ The abbreviations/special terms used in the report are listed in part 1 of the Annex to this report.

² The legal basis for the mission and reference to Community acts quoted in the report or used during the mission are mentioned in part 2 of the Annex to this report.

³ OJ No L 36 of 7.02.2004 p. 50 – 61.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. Avian Influenza

General

AI, a poultry disease caused by a group of viruses, can lead to serious losses in the poultry industry. AI is a highly contagious infection in birds and can spread quickly if not controlled. A large number of different subtypes exist, mainly referred to with a code referring to their haemagglutinin and neuraminidase antigens (H and N respectively, each followed by a number (e.g. H5N1)). Certain types are much more pathogenic than others and these cause a disease in poultry, which in the past was mainly referred to as “*fowl plague*”, but currently rather as highly pathogenic AI (HPAI). This disease is listed by the *Office International des Epizooties* (OIE) as a “list A” disease.

Apart from HPAI, certain types are less virulent for poultry and are therefore called low pathogenic AI (LPAI). These types are currently not covered by OIE rules, or by Council Directive 92/40/EEC. Mutations from LPAI to HPAI have occurred however, and, therefore, subtypes that easily mutate⁴ such as the H5 and H7 groups which have multiple basic amino acids at the cleavage site of the haemagglutinin, are also subject to restrictions. To date, all HPAI viruses that cause generalised rather than respiratory disease belong to either the H5 or H7 subtypes. However, not all H5 and H7 viruses are virulent for poultry.

Domestic fowl, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, quail and pheasants are susceptible. Disease outbreaks occur most frequently in domestic chickens and turkeys. Many species of wild birds, particularly water birds and seabirds, are also susceptible, but infections in these birds are generally sub-clinical.

The immediate source of infection for domestic poultry can seldom be ascertained, but most outbreaks probably start with direct or indirect contact between domestic birds and waterfowl. Many of the strains that circulate in wild birds are either non-pathogenic or mildly pathogenic for poultry. The virus remains viable for long periods in tissues, faeces and also in water.

A special aspect of AI is, as for other influenza viruses, the possibility to be pathogenic for humans. Most influenza pandemics have probably found their origin in influenza viruses of animal origin. This is a major cause of concern, in particular in those regions where close contacts between high density populations of potentially infected animal species and humans exist.

In recent years, several countries, such as Hong Kong, Chile, Mexico, Canada and USA, have reported one or more outbreaks of AI on their territory, while in the EU a serious epidemic of the disease occurred in Italy in 2000 and The Netherlands in 2003. Since January 2004 a widespread epidemic of HPAI has been devastating poultry flocks in several South East Asian countries. Along with poultry, other animal species were affected (cats, tigers, leopards, pigs). Of major concern world wide is the fact that humans have also been affected by the H5 N1 virus responsible of the epidemic in animals, killing 12 people in Thailand and 17 so far in Vietnam. Vaccination is normally not officially applied against HPAI in most of the affected countries, Thailand included,

⁴ A virulent strain may emerge either by genetic mutation or by re-assortment of less virulent strains.

even though China reported using the vaccination as an emergency measure in some of its affected provinces.

Specific to Thailand

Thailand officially reported the first case of HPAI (H5N1 strain) on 23 January 2004. In the autumn of 2003, outbreaks of high mortality had been reported in the country in poultry species but the HPAI virus had not been detected. However, the outbreaks, which had been reported as caused by the bacteria *Pasteurella multocida*, were treated with measures applicable to wide-spreading virus-like disease (culling of birds in the affected farms, movement restrictions in surveillance areas of up to 50km around the outbreaks, etc.). Since the outbreak, the disease has spread all over the country affecting more than 50 of the 76 provinces. The disease has been reported in over a thousand flocks of poultry of different species and categories. However, uncertainty exists as to the exact number of outbreaks, given the fact that different figures have been reported in different documents for the same period. It would appear that 75% of the affected flocks are in the category of less than 50 birds. Tigers were also affected, probably due to feeding with carcasses of affected poultry, along with cats and leopards. So far, over 17 HPAI cases attributed to the same virus have resulted in 12 human deaths.

Thailand has been trying to eradicate the disease through culling of infected premises and in some cases through preventive culling and other restriction measures. Vaccination for poultry has been debated in the country for the last 6 months but is still forbidden.

Close contact with wild birds has been suggested as the initial cause of the index case, and as one of the causes of the spreading of the epidemic. An epidemiological study carried out in 2004 suggests that free-range duck farming is the cause of the concentration of outbreaks in the central region of the country, prompting Thai Authorities to propose the culling of an important part of the traditional duck flock. The government plans to buy more than eight million ducks for slaughter and to stop the free-range duck farming in the rice producing regions.

3.2. Production and trade information

Thailand is the seventh largest producer of broilers in the world (3% share of the global poultry meat market). There are about 11,000 farms certified according to the broiler farm standard regulation in the country. Total production before the epidemic was of 1.44 million tonnes comprising of fresh meat, frozen and chilled products and processed products.

Thailand is the third largest exporter of poultry meat in the world. Traditionally, 34% of annual production was exported with half of exports going to Japan and 30% going to the EU. Poultry meat exports to the EU were of around 150,000 tonnes in 2003. In the same year 1.040 million broilers were produced. In 2004, due to AI, the figure for production decreased to 754 million. However, a certain increase is expected for 2005. Poultry meat for export is processed in 25 approved slaughterhouses and 66 processing plants.

Other poultry production is constituted by eggs; 34 million laying hens are raised in 27,322 registered farms. Almost all eggs are consumed by the

internal market. Ducks are also raised for meat in 84,232 farms; 905 of these farms are certified under the duck farm standard regulation. 13% of the duck meat produced (around 52,000 tonnes in 2003) is exported mainly to the EU. Production in 2004 was estimated to have decreased by 73% compared to the previous year and a further decrease is expected for 2005 due to the planned measures to control AI.

Native chickens are estimated to be raised in 3.25 million backyard flocks with a total of more than 60 million birds; 12.46 million birds (19% of the native chickens) are estimated to be raised for cock fighting purposes.

3.3. EU safeguard measures

Several legislative acts have been adopted by the European Commission to regulate the trade in poultry products with Thailand since the disease was declared. Thailand was closed for export of fresh poultry meat and other poultry products to the EU by Commission Decision 2004/84/EC; derogations were granted to export poultry meat processed before 1 January 2004 and for cooked poultry meat products processed at a temperature of at least 70°C. That Decision was repealed by Commission Decision 2004/122/EC, which left the same derogations in place.

4. MAIN FINDINGS: EXPORT OF COOKED POULTRY MEAT PRODUCTS

4.1. Supervision of the implementation of provisions as regards the heat treatment of cooked poultry meat products destined for export to the EU

The CA for this sector is the Department of Livestock and Development (DLD), Bureau of Livestock Standard and Certification of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

Thai legislation (Art. 37 of poultry meat and poultry products inspection regulation BE 2546/2003) stipulates that all poultry products that are heat processed in any manner shall reach an internal temperature of 72.2°C. However, the internal temperature for cured and smoked products has been fixed by the same law at 68.5°C, i.e. 1.5°C less than required by Community legislation.⁵

According to what was stated by the Thai CA and to what was observed by the mission team during the inspection in several establishments, poultry products exported to the EU are composed of products submitted to a core temperature always above 72.2°C.

4.1.1. Internal and official supervision of cooking process

During the visits to the establishments the mission team noted that:

- Establishments approved to process cooked poultry meat must have an HACCP plan approved by the CA; the cooking temperatures for poultry meat products are considered to be one of the Critical Control Points. The temperature limits are set at a range between 75°C and 82°C;
- Temperatures of products are checked at the end of the cooking times; checks are performed by establishment staff on each processing line, using

⁵ *In a letter sent to the FVO on 12/05/05, the CA commented this point (see also addendum to this report).*

a calibrated thermometer. Results of the checks are reported by hand in standardised forms;

- Official temperature checks are performed also by DLD inspectors; results were presented to the inspection team. However, the officials did not provide any evidence of the supervision done on own-checks carried out by the establishments' staff;
- Concerning the processing of cured and smoked products, no instructions were given by the CCA to officials at the establishments that the temperature limit set under Thai legislation (68.5°C) for such products was not in compliance with the requirement of 70°C set in the derogation for Thailand to export cooked product to the EU. However, one establishment was visited where such products (duck meat, cured and smoked) were processed and the temperature used was found to be in the excess of 75°C.

4.2. Supervision of the implementation of provisions as regards the traceability of cooked poultry meat products destined for export to the EU

4.2.1. Legislation

According to Thai legislation (regulation B.E. 2546) regarding the traceability system of livestock products, the poultry sector operators (in feed mills, farms, slaughterhouses and meat processing plants) must have a traceability system in place, under the supervision of DLD.

4.2.2. Traceability system in place and certification

The traceability systems as shown to the inspection team in the establishments are based on:

- a codification system, using digits and referring to lot and sub-lot numbers;
- a documentation system for recording data on production, also referring to the lot and sub-lot production.

4.2.3. Official controls

During the visits to the establishments, the inspection team carried out several traceability exercises involving the operators and the DLD officials. Through the traceability systems in place it was always possible to trace back the cooked meat products to the farms of origin.

Even though, according to Thai legislation, DLD is responsible for the supervision of the implementation of the traceability system within the poultry production sector, there was no evidence to demonstrate that the DLD officials have either an established procedure to carry out this supervision or that the supervision is in reality carried out.

4.3. Export certification

4.3.1. Administrative organisation

The Meat and Meat Products (M&MP) certification subdivision (8-9 DLD officials) is the only service responsible for controlling and signing export certificates of cooked poultry meat products intended for export to the EU.

4.3.2. Certification system in place

All movements of live birds and poultry meat products must be accompanied by two types of documents:

- the veterinary public health certificates, VPH1 (from the farm to the slaughterhouse) and VPH2 from the slaughterhouse to the processing plant and the movement permits;
- the movement permits, which were implemented after the epidemic of AI started, were introduced in order to control the movement of poultry and poultry products. There are two types of these permits: R3 for movement within a province and R4 between provinces.

When an operator wants to export cooked poultry meat products to the EU, he has to first submit a request to one of the two approved quarantine stations (Bangkok and Chonburi animal quarantine stations⁶). This step used to be compulsory for live animals and fresh poultry meat and has now been extended to cover cooked poultry meat products following the outbreak of AI, in order to better control the products to be exported.

On the basis of documents presented by the operator and of the veterinary public health certificate VPH1 the quarantine stations releases a document, the R9 form, authorising the export to the EU. Copies of this document are forwarded to the M&MP certification subdivision, to the DLD at the processing plant and to Customs.

Three steps of controls are then implemented:

- the DLD official at the processing plant carries out checks on cooked poultry meat products intended for export before loading the container;
- the DLD at the M&MP certification subdivision carries out documentary checks on the different documents including the VPH1, VPH2, and the movement permits to verify the validity of the documents before export;
- the DLD official at the quarantine station together with the customs carries out controls of the containers prior to shipment.

Although the DLD officials carry out the documentary check, they do not verify if the conditions in the health attestation to export the cooked products meat are fulfilled because they rely on the information and certificates given at farm and slaughterhouse level.

In particular, point IV 2(b) in the health attestation annexed to Commission Decision 1997/221/EC referring to the animal health conditions in Commission Decision 1994/984/EC, was not checked. In fact, according to the latter, both farms and slaughterhouse should be at the centre of an area of 10 km radius where no outbreaks of AI (and Newcastle disease) were notified in a period of thirty days before slaughtering, for the products exported and put on the market in the EU. On the other hand, the DLD officials at the farms and slaughterhouses are supposed to apply movement restriction

⁶ *In their comments to the draft report the CA specified that although the quarantine stations named in the report are the main ones used for export to the EU other stations are also approved for export.*

measures on poultry and poultry products in an area of 5 km and for a period of 21 days after an outbreak is confirmed.

5. MAIN FINDINGS: FACT FINDINGS ON HPAI CONTROL MEASURES

5.1. Avian influenza present situation

Between 1 January and 25 February 2005, day of the visit to the management centre (the “war room”, see 5.2., para 3) of the epidemic in Bangkok, there were 67 reports of suspected outbreaks, mainly in small-scale farming units. Once more, some uncertainty existed on the real number of positive cases. The outbreaks occurred in 6 regions affecting 13 out of the 76 provinces and 31 districts.

Exporting broiler farms, usually part of an integrated poultry production system and of very large dimension, have not yet been affected by the disease. The biggest farm affected, from July 2004 to date, was a laying hen farm of 330,000 birds.

5.2. Structure of organisation of the Competent Authority

The competent authority for animal disease control is the Department of Livestock and Development (DLD), Bureau of Disease Control and Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

An emergency structure has been created at different levels, to discuss all matters concerning the epidemic and establish an intervention policy. A board exists at Ministerial level, where nine out of eleven ministries are represented by deputy ministries. Boards are also established at provincial, district and sub-district level. All these boards meet regularly, usually at weekly intervals. The Ministerial board defines the guidelines for intervention but particular measures can be taken by the governors of the provinces, without seeking the agreement of the Ministerial board. In one particular case, it was found that a special surveillance activity had been undertaken in a province (Pitsanulocke) without any warning or information given to the central level.

A structure was set up in Bangkok called “the war room” to coordinate the reporting activities between headquarters of the DLD, the provinces and the laboratories.

5.3. Legal aspects

No legal definition exists of AI. The definition used now is in fact a description of symptoms written in the Manual of Standard Operation Procedure for HPAI outbreaks, to be used by the officials in the field for the purpose of recognising suspect cases. Laboratories maintained, however, that as far as they were concerned, the OIE definition was the one used.

5.4. Reporting and notification system

Reporting from the field and notification of cases has been changed several times since the beginning of the epidemic. Positive cases have been defined either with a laboratory positive result or simply with a clinical suspect from the field, but not consistently. The outbreak unit definition has also changed, so that either a farm or a village, or sub-district or even a district, was defined as an outbreak. Currently, the inspection team was told that a positive

laboratory result would constitute a case, and when the epidemiological unit would declare an outbreak, it would be either a farm or a village.

The changing of definition of a positive case and of the outbreak might be, along with the unclear definition of a positive case of HPAI, one of the causes of discrepancies between the number of outbreaks as counted by the Thai authorities and the number of reports to the OIE. For 2004 alone, Thai authorities counted 1,389⁷ cases while OIE statistics updated to 25 February 2005 report only 1,077 notified outbreaks. Exercises done by the mission team and Thai officials to understand the real number of cases for the first two months of the current year failed to find consistent figures.

Some uncertainty was also found about the definition of a confirmed case given that the word “confirmed” was used also for negative cases. Furthermore, the fact that no unique number or any other means of identification is used for the outbreaks made it almost impossible to follow up all the information or activities (slaughtering, surveillance, sampling and results, etc.) carried out in any particular case, at the different levels (DLD offices, laboratories, “war room”).

5.5. Measures taken in affected areas

As for disease notification and reporting, there have been several changes⁸ in the strategies used in affected areas since the beginning of the epidemic. In particular, the size of surveillance areas around outbreaks has changed several times; the same happened with the stamping out policy and the movement control areas. Reasons for these changes are not always clear. In some cases changes of strategy were dictated by the concentration of poultry in the affected areas or by the type of farming (backyard flocks versus intensive farming).

At present, when an outbreak is declared, a 5km area surrounding it is considered as a surveillance area; stamping out is applied in the outbreak and if a positive case is found within the surveillance, another 5km area is established and so on.

Activities in the affected areas overlapped in several occasions with other activities like the nationwide surveillance being carried out at the time of the mission, so that it was not possible to follow the activities carried out for one purpose or another.

Thai authorities reported that a public awareness campaign had been carried out by radio and television⁹; documents (posters, booklets, etc.) were also printed with information on AI and shown to the team. However, none of these documents or posters was to be seen in any of the sites visited, including public offices. The infected area visited in fact was not signposted at all.

⁷ In a document presented to the FAO/OIE Meeting on 23-25 February, yet another figure was given of 1,522 cases, only for the period July 2004 February 2005, which is not consistent with any other figure.

⁸ *In the addendum to their comments to the draft report, the CA elaborated on changes made over time to the strategies to fight AI.*

⁹ *In their comments to the draft report, the CA elaborated on the use of radio and television materials in the awareness campaign against AI.*

5.6. Routine and nationwide surveillance

Routine surveillance is done in laying hen farms, fighting cock farms, and breeding farms; samples for virological examination are taken every two months. Any flock of birds or any bird before leaving a farm has also to be sampled for virology. Broilers are sampled within 5-10 days before slaughter and the flock cannot leave the farm unless a negative result is obtained.

The time chosen for sampling in broilers farms has proven to be cumbersome for large farms. In fact if the birds are not slaughtered within 10 days from the first sample a new sampling has to be carried out. In one of the farms visited (a flock of 750,000 birds) sampling had to be done four times, increasing the work of officials, of the laboratory, and exposing the farm to multiple contacts.

On 1 February 2005, the second nationwide surveillance campaign called “W ray” associated to a poultry population census launched. The first of such campaigns had been done in October 2004. All the villages of Thailand had to be visited using the services of about one million volunteers. In all the villages all household had to be visited in order to count the poultry population and to find out about the possible presence of AI suspected cases. Targeted sampling was also carried out during this campaign. Although the aim of such campaigns was not clear apart from the census, considering also the technical aspects of the time distance between the two campaigns and the kind of sampling carried out, the Thai authorities stated at the final meeting that the objective of the campaign carried out in February was the eradication of the disease.

In one of the laboratories visited during the mission, it was found that by 22 February only a small proportion of samples collected during this campaign had been processed.

As regards wild birds, the inspection team was told that active surveillance is carried out by the Ministry of Environment; no data on this activity was available at the time of the mission. The DLD also does passive surveillance on samples submitted by the public to the official laboratories.

5.7. Laboratories

The National Institute of Animal Health in Bangkok is the reference laboratory for AI. Seven more laboratories scattered in the country act as a diagnostic facilities for the area where they are located. All those laboratories were provided in 2004 with equipment to carry out real time Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT PCR).

An unknown number of private companies have structures and the knowledge to carry out the same diagnostic activity as the official laboratories. Even though it was said that the private laboratories would be bound to report positive cases of AI, there was no sign of any control exercised by the official laboratories, in particular by the reference laboratory, on the diagnostic activity. In one particular case, a positive result from the reference laboratory in Bangkok was challenged by the private laboratory of a company; and the final result was the one given by the private laboratory.

Even though laboratories have been asked to process relatively high numbers of samples for AI coming from different activities (surveillance around

outbreaks, suspect positives, routine surveillance, etc.) no prioritisation of activities has been established. If any priority was given, samples for movement control were processed first. Furthermore, the visited laboratories had no control system from the moment samples were dispatched to the moment of result reporting.

Laboratories, in particular the reference laboratory, are not provided with the necessary technology to handle a high number of samples. The processing of information related to samples is carried out by hand at each step, so that the risk of interchanging or loss of information on samples cannot be excluded.

At present the reference laboratory has not organised a proficiency test, neither for the eight official laboratories nor for the private laboratories so that the possibility of variability of results, especially concerning PCR, cannot be excluded.

5.8. Vaccination policy

Discussion on AI vaccination started in Thailand in July 2004. The inspection team was told that a National Committee was appointed to study the matter. A world market survey was undertaken to see if suitable vaccines were available. The Committee concluded in September 2004 that enhancing bio-security measures rather than vaccination would be the policy to follow at national level and the vaccination prohibition was maintained. Vaccination however, would only be allowed in very particular cases, i.e. in endangered species of birds, and in restricted areas, namely zoos. None of these activities has apparently been implemented. Provisions were made at the same time to support research on vaccines and vaccination. To this end works were scheduled to upgrade the reference laboratory for AI in Bangkok to a P3 structure and a budget was allocated.

Between December 2004 and January 2005, due to the deterioration of the epidemiological situation throughout South East Asia, the Prime Minister ordered that a plan for an emergency vaccination be prepared. The plan is now undergoing the second drafting after the Prime Minister asked for it on 21 February. The world vaccine market has been contacted again for a suitable vaccine during the last two months. Vaccination remains forbidden for poultry. Public opinion according to the Thai CA is divided, with some exporters still not convinced of the benefits of vaccination due to possible trade implications and the position taken by some trading partners.

Thai authorities stated in their answer to the pre-mission questionnaire that the international community, in particular the trading partners, would be informed if any trial vaccination were to be scheduled in the country.

5.9. Compartmentalisation

A document was handed over to the inspection team at the end of the mission, representing a draft on measures for poultry production compartmentalisation. Two integrated companies were visited during the mission as example of a compartment. The activities of a compartment rotate around a feed mill. Companies own at the same time breeding stock, hatcheries, broiler farms, feed mills and laboratories. Units of the compartment can be located within a wide range of distances between themselves, up to 200km in one case. One of the companies visited could show that it operates under a quality system, implementing a Good

Manufacturing Practise HACCP system that is ISO certified, and that an internal audit system is in place as well as an external audit at feed mill level, hatchery and breeding farm level. The companies visited implemented a very high standard of bio-security measures at broiler farm level ranging from the separation of farms in different zones, the acquisition of extensive land surfaces to be used as a buffer zones to the strict limitation of staff movement. Staff would normally be allowed to go out of the farm only once per week in normal times. After the epidemic of AI, staff are forbidden to leave the farm before the flock of broilers is slaughtered. Farms are under supervision of both a private vet and an official vet.

6. CONCLUSION

The data provided by the CCA for the first two months of 2005 suggest that AI is still present in the country and appears mainly confined to small flocks (farms of less than 50 birds). The same figures also suggest that commercial poultry production has generally not been affected by the epidemic.

However, and given the uncertain AI case definition, the confusion in terminology, the fragmented and inconsistent information on outbreaks/cases, and the changes to intervention strategies, it is not possible to establish the true epidemiological situation with any certainty at present. Serious laboratory deficiencies together with possible unknown diagnostic activity for AI carried out in private laboratories contribute to this uncertainty.

As far as cooked poultry meat products are concerned, processors operate a cooking and traceability system, which can guarantee that the products satisfy Community requirements. The CA has also established a control system for cooked poultry meat products, but this system is not adequately supervised, notably as regards own-checks and traceability. In addition, the CA did not instruct operators and officials on the need to increase the cooking temperature for cured/smoked products that are intended for export to the EU, even though in practice this requirement appears to be met in the establishments visited. The official certification procedure in place for export of cooked poultry products to the EU at present does not guarantee that all EU health requirements set out in the health attestation are satisfied.

However, taking into account:

- the nature of the product (cooked),
- the standard of the cooking process,
- the fact that restrictions on movements are applied¹⁰ (although at a scale different from that required by Community legislation),

there appears to be no significant risk posed today to animal health in the EU by importing cooked poultry meat products from Thailand.

¹⁰ In a letter dated 21 March 2005 sent to the FVO, the Thai CCA stated that meat destined for the EU come from areas not under restriction and where in a 10 km radius from a farm and/or slaughterhouse there have been no outbreaks of AI and Newcastle disease in the preceding 30 days.

7. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 2 March 2005 with the DLD, in Bangkok, chaired by the Director General Dr Yukol Limlamtong. At this meeting, the mission team presented the main findings.

The representatives of the CCA clarified and discussed some points raised during the mission.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITY

The Thai authorities should present Commission services, within one month of receipt of the final report, with an action plan, including a time table for its completion:

- (1) The CCA should guarantee, giving written instructions, that all the establishments producing cured and smoked poultry meat products to be exported to the EU, treat the products at a temperature of at least 70°C as required by Community legislation.
- (2) The CA should instruct establishment officials to carry out regular supervision on own-checks carried out by the establishment staff on cooking temperatures and on the traceability systems operated by the processors.
- (3) The CCA should develop the relevant capabilities to ensure: a) improved recording and use of disease data in the field and at laboratory and central level; b) more efficient management and transmission of information related to the outbreaks at national and international level.
- (4) The CCA should clarify the legal definition of AI and revise the use of standard terminology for outbreaks and confirmed cases of AI.

ADDENDUM

Competent Authority's response to the recommendations in the report

In their correspondence of 21 March, 2005, 12 May 2005, and 8 June 2005, the CA reported the corrective actions already taken in response to some of the main findings and recommendations made in the report.

In particular, assurances were given that the poultry meat products to be exported to the EU will all be treated at a core temperature of 70° for a minute.

The CA also stated in their comments to the draft report that a recording system for outbreaks has been set up which gives a unique number to all AI outbreaks, in order to facilitate the follow up of information related to the same outbreaks.

ANNEX

1. List of abbreviations and special terms used

AI	Avian Influenza
CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
DLD	Department of Livestock Development
EU	European Union
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
List A	Transmissible diseases that have the potential for very serious and rapid spread, irrespective of national borders, that are of serious socio-economic or public health consequence and that are of major importance in the international trade of animals and animal products. (OIE definition)
LPAI	Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza
M&MP	Meat and Meat Products
OIE	<i>Office International des Epizooties</i> (International Animal Health Bureau)
PCR	Polymerase Chain Reaction
RT PCR	Reverse Transcriptase Polymerase Chain Reaction

2. Legal basis

The mission was carried out under the general provisions of Community legislation and, in particular:

- Council Directive 91/494/EEC on **animal health conditions** governing intra-Community trade in and imports from third countries of **fresh poultry meat**¹¹;
- Council Directive 92/118/EEC¹² of 17 December 1992 laying down animal health and public health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of products not subject to the said requirements laid down in specific Community rules referred to in Annex A(I) to 89/662/EEC and, as regards pathogens, to Directive 90/425/EEC, in particular Annex II, chapters I and II;
- Council Directive 97/78/EC laying down the principles governing the organisation of **veterinary checks** on products entering the Community from third countries¹³, in particular Article 22;
- Commission Decision 98/140/EC laying down certain detailed rules concerning **on-the-spot checks** carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in third countries¹⁴.

¹¹ OJ No L 268 of 24.9.1991, p. 35

¹² OJ No L 62 of 15.3.1993, p. 49

¹³ OJ No L 24 of 30.1.1998, p. 9

¹⁴ OJ No L 38 of 12.2.1998, p. 14

In addition, certain aspects of the following legislation (implementing Commission Decisions) will serve as a technical basis for the mission:

- Commission Decision 94/438/EC¹⁵ of 7 June 1994 laying down the criteria for classifying third countries and parts thereof with regard to avian influenza and Newcastle disease in relation to imports of fresh poultry meat and amending Decision 93/342/EEC;
- Commission Decision 97/221/EC¹⁶ of 28 February 1997 laying down the animal health conditions and model veterinary certificates in respect **of imports of meat products** from third countries and revoking Decision 91/449/EEC;
- Commission Decision 97/222/EC¹⁷ of 28 February 1997 laying down the list of third countries from which the Member States authorize the importation of meat products;
- Commission Decision 2003/812/EC¹⁸ of 17 December 2003 drawing up **lists of third countries** from which Member States are to authorize imports of certain products for human consumption subject to Council Directive 92/118/EEC, as amended;
- Commission Decision 2004/93/EC¹⁹ of 29 January 2004 concerning protective measures in relation to avian influenza in several Asian countries.

¹⁵ OJ No L 181 of 15.7.1994, p. 181

¹⁶ OJ No L 89 of 4.4.1997, p. 32 – 38

¹⁷ OJ No L 89 of 4.4.1997, p. 39 – 46

¹⁸ OJ No L 305 of 22.11.2003, p. 17

¹⁹ OJ No L 36 of 7.2.2004, p. 50 - 61