

# RABBIT PRODUCTION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

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**Abstract** - Rabbit meat is included in the of Common Market Organisations related to agricultural products which are included in Annex II of the European Treaty but without any specific policy. The mechanisms are mainly common duty regime, absence of quantitative restrictions of imports, safeguard clause, implementation of community rules on competition and free movement in the community territory. From a sanitary point of view, the only compulsory requirement for rabbit trade is that they come from holdings free of rabies and myxomatosis. In addition some member states have drawn up specific surveillance programmes for Viral Haemorrhagic Disease. Rabbit meat intended for the European market should come from an approved establishment and therefore should comply with stipulations on pre-slaughter and *post-mortem* health inspection. Animal should come an area were the rabbit's requirements were respected such as among others, handling under satisfactory hygiene conditions, compulsory health mark, hygienic storage and transport. Council Regulations encourages the formation of producer groups in order to remedy the structural deficiencies affecting the supply and marketing of rabbit products , and there are a significant number of rabbit producer groups recognised in the European Union.

During the last six years community production of rabbit meat has decreased steadily by an average of 0.69 % per year. As regards foreign trade, community imports volume are bigger than exports so it gives a negative balance in absolute value. During the 1989-1994 period community imports fell slightly but remain around 30.000 tons, mainly from Hungary and China. France is the first exporting country in the European Union but Community exports represent only 7 % of total imports of rabbit meat.

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### MARKET REGULATIONS

Since 1962, when the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was developed improvement and management of agricultural markets has been carried out within the framework of Common Market Organisations (CMO). These CMO are specific for each agricultural sector and provide for more or less complex mechanisms and administrative structures in relation to the economic and social importance of each sector.

In general, the CMO are based on common prices regime and on a safeguard system aimed at protecting community production as regards foreign trade.

Rabbit meat is included in the CMO related to agricultural products which are included in Annex II of the European Treaty but without any specific CMO. Council Regulation (EEC) No 827/68, known in Community jargon as « Soldes » Regulation, includes rabbit meat in its provisions and it covers only essential mechanisms intended to maintain conditions for a stable market. These mechanisms are common duty regime, absence of quantitative restrictions of imports, safeguard clause, implementation of community rules on competition and free movement in the community territory.

### SANITARY MEASURES

From a sanitary point of view, community rabbit production is governed by certain rules adopted with a view to the completion of the internal market. There are two main aspects to take into account in this regard : animal health and public health.

As regards animal health questions, requirements on trade and imports into the Community of animals and « live products »<sup>1</sup> from animals are laid down in Council Directive 92/65/EEC.

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<sup>1</sup> Live products refers to products intended for breeding like semen, ova and embryos.

This Directive foresees the possibility of extending an optional certificate to accompany movements of lagomorphs in intra-Community trade. Member States could draw up, either directly or through the breeders, a voluntary or compulsory control or surveillance programme for certain diseases. Such programmes aim to obtain improved sanitary area status. In order to protect its sanitary status, a territory that meets such a situation could ask the Standing Veterinary Committee for the adoption of additional guarantees. These additional measures could be a compulsory health certificate for lagomorphs moving in its area, among others. Diseases for which programmes could be presented are listed in the Annex to this Directive and are myxomatosis, tularaemia and viral haemorrhagic disease.

In practice, the only compulsory requirement for rabbit trade is that they come from holdings free of rabies and myxomatosis.

Concerning public health matters, Council Directive 92/118/EEC, known as « Balai Directive » establishes requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of products not subject to the requirements of any specific community rules.

On the other hand, Council Directive 91/495/EEC regulates public health and animal health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of rabbit meat and farmed game meat. Rabbit meat intended for the European market should come from an approved establishment and therefore should comply with stipulations on pre-slaughter and *post-mortem* health inspection. Animals should come from an area or a holding free of restrictions related to health problems. There is a list of other requirements similar to those laid down for poultry meat such as among others, handling under satisfactory hygiene conditions, compulsory health mark, hygienic storage and transport.

## STRUCTURE MEASURES

During the period 1989-1993 the Structural Funds reform concluded its first phase, introducing relevant amendments on structural measures and procedures. This reform introduced five essential principles : concentration, cooperation, cohesion, adequate management and simplification.

The second phase of the reform consolidates the principles of concentration and cooperation and introduces new principles such as programming and additionally for the period 1994-1999. So the principles of the reformed Structural Funds policy are :

- Concentration of the intervention measures in five priority objectives
- Cooperation between community, national, regional and local authorities
- Programming to achieve a more appropriate management of the Structural Funds
- Additionally to maintain the structural expenditure at least at the same level as the previous programming period in order to achieve genuine economic impact.

At present, the administrative procedure for applicant projects requesting a community subsidy must follow new guidelines. First, every Member State must present a rural and food sector plan including a detailed analysis of the situation on each subsector and the projected improvements. Taking into account every national plan, the Commission shall adopt a Decision, named Community Support Framework on the priority measures to finance during the following six years.

Secondly, Member States must present Multiannual operational programmes underlining sectors that could receive investments and the amount of the mentioned investments. The projects could be concerned with one or more sectors as well as one or more regions.

## PRODUCER GROUPS

Council Regulation (EEC) no 1360/78 encourages the formation of producer groups in order to remedy the structural deficiencies affecting the supply and marketing of agricultural products.

The granting of aid to cover part of the formation and operating expenses could be paid over five years. The amount of aid is limited by the following regression series 5 % of the value of the products for the two first years, 4 % the third, 3 % the fourth and 2 % the fifth.

The granting of aid to producer groups is conditioned by the commitment by the group to place the whole of the production on the market and, on the other hand, to give proof of adequate economic activity.

The minimum requirements of rabbit producer groups are laid down in Commission Regulation (EEC) no 220/91, such requirements are slightly different for each Member State. There are a significant number of rabbit producer groups recognised in the European Union (Table 1).

**Table 1 : Minimum Requirements of Rabbit Producer Groups in the EU**

Member state	Volume of Production	Minimum membership
Italy	220000 head	200
Greece	200000 head	20
Spain	250000 head	35
Portugal	30000 head	20

## TRADE

During the last six years community production of rabbit meat has decreased steadily by an average of 0.69 % per year (Table 2).

As regards foreign trade, community imports volume are bigger than exports so it gives a negative balance in absolute value. During this period community imports fell slightly but remain around 30.000 tons. Between 1989 and 1994, Hungary retained first place in the list of exporters to the European Union, except in 1994 when China reached 47 % of total imports (Table 3).

In this period, Italy retained first place of importing Member States followed by France. Nevertheless, Germany has obtained second place thanks in particular to the change of the origin of imports from Poland to China and it has increased its total volume of imports by 44 % (Tables 4 and 5).

France is the first exporting country in the European Union. Community exports represent only 7 % of total imports of rabbit meat. The main destination of community exports is Switzerland (Tables 6 and 7).

The supply balance shows an average rate of self sufficiency of 95 % during the last six years due in particular to the prevalence of community production on imports from third countries (Table 2).

During the last six years total consumption of rabbit meat fell slightly although it still maintains a level of around 1.7 kg/head/year. Before the BSE crisis, annual consumption of other meats during the same period remained stagnant and rabbit meat consumption has decreased steadily by an average of 1 % a year.

Table 2 : Supply balance of rabbit meat in the European Union (EUR 1)

Year	Gross production	LIVE ANIMALS*				Net Production	MEAT			
		Exports		Imports			Exports		Imports	
		extra	intra	extra	intra		extra	intra	extra	intra
1989	527	0	2	2	2	529	3	7	38	8
1990	537	0	3	1	3	538	3	6	33	8
1991	529	0	3	1	3	529	3	5	25	7
1992	546	0	3	0	3	546	2	8	29	9
1993	560	0	1	0	2	560	2	12	32	8
1994	545	0	2	0	5	545	2	14	30	10

\* Converted into carcass weight (coef. 0.50)

Source : Eurostat-Experts group of Advisory Committee for poultry meat.

Table 3 : Imports of rabbit meat in the European Union

THIRD COUNTRY	1989	%	1990	%	1991	%	1992	%
China	13.304	33.61	11.170	32.32	4.835	18.73	8.603	29.28
Hungary	16.977	42.89	17.045	49.32	16.621	64.40	15.969	54.40
Statistical secret	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Tchec. Rep	2.205	5.57	1.999	5.78	1.583	6.13	2.190	7.23
Poland	2.465	6.23	1.864	5.39	1.977	7.66	1.886	6.23
East Germany	2.113	5.34	1.214	3.51	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total EUR 12	39.579	100.00	34.559	100.00	25.810	100.00	29.288	100.00
Total EUR 15								

Source : Eurostat

**Table 4 : Imports of rabbit meat by member state (tons/year)**

MEMBER STATE	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Italy	18.427	17.944	15.930	15.877	13.362	8.600
Germany	2.728	2.289	3.398	4.339	4.975	7.156
France	13.215	9.687	4.542	6.051	5.491	6.322
Netherlands	600	675	290	163	5.388	5.285
United Kingdom	2.215	2.277	608	562	732	1.428
Belgium+Luxem.	1.854	1.531	929	2.139	1.756	1.160
Total EUR 12	39.579	34.559	25.810	29.288	31.746	29.997
Total EUR 15						30.024

Source : Eurostat

**Table 5 : Imports of rabbit meat by member state (% of main origin)**

MEMBER STATE	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Italy from Hungary	80	83	87	88	82	79
Germany from Poland*	59	64	53	40	43	62
France from China	67	74	48	71	88	100
Netherlands from Hungary**	79	45	50	59	98	99
United Kingdom from China	96	98	90	99	99	99
Bel-Lux from China	35	58	86	92	95	74

\* except in 1994 from China

Source : Eurostat

\*\* except in 89-90 from the former East Germany

**Table 6 : Exports of rabbit meat from the European Union**

DESTINATION	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Switzerland	1.620	1.583	1.590	1.201	1.079	951
Canary Islands	122	252	476	476	451	499
Andorra	157	166	178	177	174	177
Martinique	166	159	80	38	10	62
Reunion	498	318	82	58	53	19
Total EUR 12	2.853	2.732	2.679	2.142	2.099	1.990
Total EUR 15						1.997

Source : Eurostat

**Table 7 : Exports of rabbit meat by member state**

MEMBER STATE	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
France	2.342	1.935	1.742	1.367	1.267	1.036
Italy	59	58	131	126	110	147
Netherlands	129	217	81	50	65	120
Total EUR 12	2.853	2.732	2.679	2.146	2.099	1.990

Source : Eurostat