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ARES(2018)

Honourable Chairman,

Thank you for your letter of 11 December 2018 on the draft Delegated and Implementing Regulations concerning specific rules on official controls prepared in accordance with Article 18 of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council (the Official Control Regulation)<sup>1</sup>, in which you express concerns on the involvement of veterinary students in meat inspection and the abandonment of palpations and incisions in post-mortem inspection.

The draft Delegated Regulation foresees that “*Member States may lay down specific rules for veterinary students having successfully passed an exam on the subjects referred to in point 3 of Chapter I of Annex II and who are temporarily working at a slaughterhouse in the presence of an official veterinarian*”. As clearly stated, veterinary students could only be involved if an official veterinarian is present. The draft regulation does not enable veterinary students to work as official veterinarians, as this would contradict the standards of the World Animal Health Organisation (OIE). Furthermore, veterinary students could only carry out certain inspection tasks under the supervision of the official veterinarian, if they passed an exam which is more demanding than the requirements laid down for official auxiliaries to carry out similar tasks. Finally, I believe that experienced professionals should help younger ones to start their professional life. The involvement

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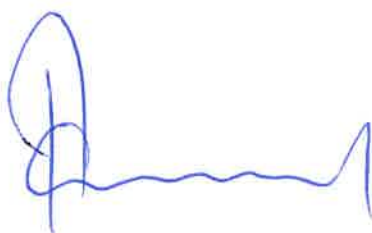
<sup>1</sup> OJ L 95, 7.04.2017, p. 1

of (last school year) veterinary students was requested by Member States to give students a “flavour” of meat inspection, on the side of experienced official veterinarians, and to possibly encourage them to widen their professional options and eventually choose that part of the veterinarian profession. I see only benefits in that, and would have rather expected experienced veterinarians to praise the possibility for them to smoothly introduce new veterinary generations to the food safety world, for a widening of the field of activities of veterinarians.

Turning to the techniques of inspection, and notably the question of incisions and palpations, let me underline that these are not abandoned in the proposed revision of post-mortem inspection. Their number per carcass is reduced, using a risk-based approach. The BIOHAZ Panel (Opinion of the Scientific Panel on biological hazards) of the European Food Safety Authority recommended in its Opinions on meat inspection<sup>2</sup> to apply only visual inspection as routine post-mortem inspection in order to avoid cross-contaminations of carcasses by most relevant hazards such as *Salmonella*. To avoid that some animal diseases might be missed by such an approach, a number of incisions and palpations are maintained in the current revision of post-mortem inspection. Furthermore, if any abnormality is found, all relevant incisions and palpations must be carried out. Additional testing e.g. for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* were introduced, being the most reported food-borne disease, and therefore, consumers’ protection will be significantly increased by the revised meat inspection.

My colleagues and I remain available for any further clarifications that you may require.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a series of connected loops and a final vertical stroke.

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<sup>2</sup> EFSA Journal 2011;9(10):2351 (swine)  
EFSA Journal 2012;10(6):2741 (poultry)  
EFSA Journal 2013;11(6):3266 (cattle)  
EFSA Journal 2013;11(6):3263 (solipeds)  
EFSA Journal 2013;11(6):3265 (small ruminants)