

To: Interested Parties

Date: 17 December 2007

Reference: FIN 12/2007

Dear Sir or Madam

FISH OIL HYGIENE REQUIREMENTS AND IMPORTS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES

Under EU food hygiene legislation there is a requirement for fish oil from third countries to come from approved fishery products establishments. However a derogation was extended earlier this year to allow third countries time to comply with the new arrangements. Food business operators are therefore able to continue importing fish oil from any establishment previously approved for that purpose until 31 October 2008 – see FINS 09/2007 and 11/2007 for further information.

I am writing to inform you that the European Commission has established a restricted working group with membership drawn from UK, Spain, Ireland, Lithuania, Denmark, France, Norway and Iceland. The first meeting of this group was held on 10 December 2007 at which time the scope and functions of the group were agreed.

The group is charged with considering the hygiene requirements for fish oil production and, by April 2008, presenting proposals to the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health to either:

- Confirm that the hygiene requirements will stand with no further amendment or derogation; or,
- Propose and agree any changes to the hygiene legislation that are considered necessary and appropriate. The Commission have confirmed that consideration of the animal by-products regulation (1774/2002) is not within the scope of this group.

The initial meeting identified that there are a number of potential approaches to the situation ranging from: no change to the hygiene rules and full implementation when the derogation expires through to significant amendment of the technical rules.

Currently there are wide ranging views amongst group members and it was agreed that certain interested parties would be invited by the Commission to help identify which additional requirements in the hygiene package compared to the by-product regulation are difficult to comply with.

The interested parties identified by the Commission will be asked to provide further information to the next meeting of the group which is to be held in Brussels on 17 January 2008.

The Food Standards Agency is representing the UK at these meetings and I would therefore be interested to hear from you if you have information that you feel would help inform these discussions. The Agency is keen to ensure that controls are risk based, proportionate and appropriate for the effective protection of public health.

I would be very happy to discuss the issues with you in more detail on request.

If you need any further information please let me know. You may also be aware that we have an imports section on the Food Standards Agency's website and can be found at www.food.gov.uk/imports

Yours sincerely

Mark Ball
Imported Food Division