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Abstracts

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Veterinary and sanitary examination of game meat in the West-Balkan region - harmonization with European Union legislation

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This paper analyzes the regulations concerning the game meat hygiene in the Region of West-Balkan countries: Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina in relation to European Union legislation [Regulations (EC) No 852/2004, No 853/2004 and No 854/2004]. We used the Austrian Regulation on the inspection of meat of 2006 as a sample of European Union country, because of highly developed economic impact of hunting and similar hunting tradition with West-Balkan region.

In Serbia, a number of legislative texts apply to wild game: (1) a Law on Game and Hunting (Off. Gazette of RS No 18/2010), (2) Veterinary medicine law (Off. Gazette of RS No 91/2005), and (3) the "rulebook on veterinary-sanitary conditions, and general and specific requirements for food hygiene to be met by facilities for handling with shot wild game, and how to carry out official controls shot wild game" (Off. Gazette of RS No 68/10 of 2010).

In Croatia, a country that will become the member of the European Union in 2013, most regulations in this field are fully compliant with EU legislation: The law on veterinary medicine (Off. Gazette of R. Croatia No 41/2007), Food Act (Off. Gazette of R. Croatia No 46/2007), Regulation on the hygiene of food of animal origin (Off. Gazette of R. Croatia No 99/2007) and Ordinance on the certificate about the origin of wildlife animals and marking of parts of big game (Off. Gazette of R. Croatia No 95/2010). In this country of the West Balkan region, a project entitled "Improvement in the implementation of EU hygiene package in wild game meat" has been organized within the TAIXEX programme of the European Commission.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, two entities have to be considered, namely the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of Srpska, which have separate legal regulations, with similar name and content. These regulations refer – *inter alia* – to the use of game meat in the hotels and restaurants.

Harmonization of the respective legislation in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina should take into account the good (and bad) experiences made by Croatia, and, finally, it should be considered that for effective implementation of regulations in regard to game meat hygiene, and the future implementation of EU regulations, it is not enough just to intensify control and penalty provisions for particular violations or crimes. Contrary, raising awareness about the importance of these measures for human and animal health should be a prerequisite, and education of all participants (hunters, trained preson, veterinarian) is practically an obligatory part of its. All these measures requires time, persistence and of course the unity of all stakeholders, which currently is not the case in West Balkan countries (Federal and Local authorities, Hunting Association, Hunting Chamber, consumers and others).

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