



Ministero della Salute

The Italian Public Health System for Animal Health and Food Safety

COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

The Italian Ministry of Health (MOH)

The Italian Ministry of Health (MOH) is the central body of the National Health Services' dealing with orientation and planning on issues of public health, veterinary health, food hygiene and safety. The Italian Constitution confers some exclusive competences on the Central Authority (including international affairs, themes of general interest, import controls and international disease protection) and defines the areas where competences are shared between State and Regions. Italy is divided into 19 Regions and two Autonomous Provinces which are responsible for planning, coordinating, managing, authorizing and verifying controls within their territories. The Permanent Conference State-Regions manages the coordination between Central Authority and Regional Services, so as to ensure a continuous dialogue between the two Authorities.

Organization of the Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health is organized in a General Secretariat and 12 Directorates-General. The following three Directorates deal with hygiene and food safety, nutrition and veterinary public health:

- Directorate-General for animal health and veterinary medicinal products (DGSAF);
- Directorate-General for hygiene, food safety and nutrition (DGISAN);
- Directorate-General for collegial bodies for health protection(DGOCTS).

The Directorate-General for animal health and veterinary medicinal products (DGSAF) is responsible for drawing up national programs for the eradication of animal diseases and guidelines for the control of animal welfare on farms, by ensuring effective controls on imported animals, food of animal origin and feedingstuffs at the Border Inspection Posts (BIPs). It also provides general guidelines for feedingstuffs and animal nutrition; issues marketing authorizations for veterinary medicinal products, aimed at licensing of manufacturing, importation, authorization for Compliance with GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices).

The Directorate-General for hygiene, food safety and nutrition (DGISAN) is concerned with: health and safety of food production and marketing, primary products included; control plans of the

food chain and operational guidelines for official controls on imported food; management of RASFF system and unit crisis for food, feed, animal by-products; nutrition and products for use in special diets; functional foods; food supplements; herbal products for food; nutrition labeling; nutrition education; health aspects related to food technology and novel foods; genetically modified organisms; additives, food flavorings, contaminants and food contact materials; plant protection products; hygiene and safety of food for export; investigations, audits and inspections in the areas of competence.

The Directorate-General for Collegial bodies for health protection (DGOCTS) is the national EFSA contact point. It is responsible for the physical, chemical and biological risk assessment for food safety. It is also the national contact point for the Food Safety National Committee. It is responsible for the coordination and planning of actions aimed at assessing risks in the food chain, as well as of the activities of the Committee of Consumers and Producers Associations, in collaboration with the Directorate-General for hygiene, food safety and nutrition (DGISAN).

Peripheral offices of the MOH (BIPs, USMAF,UVAC)

The following local ministerial offices are responsible for import controls and intra-Union trade:

- 23 Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) for import controls on animals, food of animal origin and feedingstuffs;
- 37 local offices at the main ports and airports, responsible for import controls on food of non-animal origin, which depend on 12 main Maritime, Aviation and Border Health Office (USMAF);
- 17 Veterinary Offices for Compliance with EU Requirements (UVAC), responsible for intra Community trade of animals, food of animal origin and feed.

Carabinieri Tutela Salute (NAS)

The Nucleo Anti Sofisticazioni (NAS – the Food Law Enforcement Department) is a special unit of the Italian Corps of Carabinieri, which operates under the supervision and direction of the Ministry of Health. It is organized into a central command, 3 main local units and 38 territorial inspection units. It carries out investigations and controls on illegal adulteration of foodstuffs, fraud, and illegal trafficking of medicines, both on its own initiative or upon request of MOH offices, also including hygiene inspections, verification of control systems, sampling and analysis of products and examination of authorization documents.

Regional Public Health Services (RPHS)

Following the amendment of the Italian Constitution performed on 2001, human and animal health, food and feed safety and animal welfare are currently issues of common responsibility at national and regional level. A permanent cooperation between Regions and Central Authority is ensured by the Permanent Conference between State, Regions and Autonomous Provinces. The Central Authority retains the responsibility of import controls and international prophylaxis and export. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies (MIPAAF) is responsible for controls on quality (recipes) and traceability (labels) of food and feed and on plant health.

The 19 Regions and 2 Autonomous Province are organized into Regional Public Health Services (RPHS), most of which are divided in two sections: the Regional Veterinary Service (RVS), which is responsible for food of animal origin, animal health and welfare and feed safety; the Regional Food Hygiene and Nutrition Service (RFHNS-SIAN), which is responsible for products of non-animal origin, food supplements and food contact materials. Local Health Units (LHU-AUSL) are

present in each Region and act as public bodies responsible for the organization and management of all public health facilities at local level.

Local Health Units (LHU - ASL)

The Local Health Units have a high degree of managerial, administrative, financial and technical autonomy and are organized in sanitary districts, departments of prevention and hospital services. Public health responsibilities are shared between two separate services within the Department of Prevention: the Food Hygiene and Nutrition Service (SIAN), and the Local Veterinary Services (LVS). These latter are responsible for: animal health and welfare, food of animal origin and feedingstuffs, and are usually divided into three different areas:

- area A - responsible for animal health;
- area B – responsible for food of animal origin;
- area C – responsible for animal breeding, animal production and by-products.

This distinction between areas of activity does not exist in all the LHU-ASL and the allocation of resources may vary according to the territory compositions where each local health unit operate.

The majority of inspectors in the Local Veterinary Service (LVS) are veterinarians. Approximately a total of 5,227 full-time veterinarians are employed in the LHU-ASL.

The Food Hygiene and Nutrition Service (SIAN) is responsible for food of non-animal origin. The staff of this Service is composed by some medical doctors and mostly by technicians. The staff responsible for control activities is specifically designated for this purpose, whereas other staff is also involved in other public health activities.

Laboratory Services (ISS-IZS)

The *National Health Institute (ISS)* is the leading technical and scientific public body of the Italian National Health Service. The ISS (which falls under the remit of MoH) supervises all laboratories in charge of food and feed controls, and carries out confirmatory analysis at national level. Its activities include research, control, training and consultation in the interest of public health protection. The ISS is also a Community Reference Laboratory for *Escherichia coli* (including verotoxigenic *E. coli*), parasites (i.e *Trichinella*) and the residues listed in annex I, group B 3 (c) of Directive 96/23/EC.

The *Istituti Zooprofilattici Sperimentali - National Reference Centers (IZS)* are located in most Italian Regions. The IZSs are veterinary public health institutes which form a network of public laboratories at national and regional level. IZS are organized in 10 central laboratories and 85 field diagnostic units at provincial level. All IZS laboratories for the official control of feed and foodstuffs are accredited to perform analyses on food of animal origin and on animal health.

Tests on contaminants, pesticides and food of plant origin are performed by 27 *Environment Protection Agencies (ARPA)* with 54 local laboratories at provincial level. ARPA comprises laboratories responsible for both environmental monitoring and food controls. ARPA laboratories report to the local LHU-ASL and they may perform analyses for more than one LHU-ASL in a particular Region. Official analysis are also carried out by the Public Health Laboratories (PHL-LSP) operating within the ASL's Prevention Departments. The tested matrixes include food of animal and non-animal origin, water and food contact materials.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ITALIAN SYSTEM FOR VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH

The system of veterinary public health covers animal health, animal welfare, controls on imported live animal and animal products, feedingstuffs and animal nutrition, veterinary medicinal products and residues, adopting the “*from farm to fork*” approach.

The Directorate General for Animal Health and Veterinary Medicines of the Ministry of Health is the Central Competent Authority (CCA) responsible for general policy, coordination, monitoring and supervision at national level on the following issues:

- **Animal health**

Veterinarians working in the “Animal Health Service” of the Local Health Unit (LHU-ASL) carry out controls at local level.

Information on epidemiological data and technical reports are forwarded twice a year by the LHU-ASL to the Regions and by these latter to the CCA.

National databases cover holding registration, animal identification and movement controls and concern bovines, sheep and goats, pigs, poultry holdings, aquaculture holdings and beehives. These databases are maintained by the Istituto Zooprofilattico sperimentale di Teramo (IZS), which is also the National reference center for epidemiology. All Local Health Unit (LHU-ASL) have access to the national databases. The central bovine database has been recognized as fully operational by Commission Decision 2006/132/EC.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has implemented a monthly monitoring system for anomalies, including births, movement and slaughters. Every year the MOH sends a listing to each Region specifying the minimum number of controls to be carried out.

A movement document (Form 4) and passports for cattle are required for all movements that must be authorized by Regional Competent Authorities (RCAs).

The DGSAF is responsible for drawing up national eradication programmes, which must then be implemented by regional authorities. Systematic verification and monitoring by the CCA is carried out in relation to the financial aspects of the eradication programmes.

Eradication, control and monitoring programmes cover bovine brucellosis, enzootic bovine leucosis, bovine tuberculosis, ovine and caprine brucellosis, bluetongue, salmonella in breeding poultry, African swine fever (in Sardinia), avian influenza, BSE, TSEs and Scrapie and Swine Vesicular Disease (SVD). The Regions may adopt their own programmes on issues in areas not regulated at national level. These programmes are sent to the CCA for information only.

A chain of command, from the CCA through DGSAF to the RVS and the LHU-ASL, applies to contingency plans. A crisis unit was established in MOH to handle all outbreaks, including coordination at national level (Legislative Decree 202 of 1 October 2005).

The Crisis Unit has the task to:

- plan actions and coordinate disease control and eradication measures throughout the national territory;
- coordinate, connect and overview tasks on disease prevention, information and control measures;
- properly enforce procedures and criteria for action management;
- guarantee an effective connection between MOH's central and local offices, Regions and Autonomous Provinces and local bodies.

The Central Crisis Unit issued guidelines on epidemiological surveillance and action strategy for AI control and eradication in Italy; recommendations on the conduct of people handling or coming into contact with birds, and guidelines for operators exposed to AI outbreaks.

In the event of notification of an infectious disease, these bodies may act as crisis units at central, regional and local level.

Official analyses in the area of animal health are performed by the IZS network.

- **Animal welfare**

A National Control Plan for risk-based on-farm animal welfare controls was introduced in 2008. As of 2010, the planning of the minimum level of the control for the animal welfare during transport and the protection of animals during slaughter was introduced into the National Control Plan.

Official controls on farms

Controls are coordinated by the RVS and performed by the LHU-ASL veterinary services.

Currently, all farms are visited at least once every three years. The LHU-ASL are responsible for taking action in the event of non-compliance which may include punitive measures and, when animals are severely maltreated, referral to the judicial authorities.

The CCA has issued guidelines for the control of animal welfare on farm for calves and pigs, including instructions on: specific requirements to be controlled; criteria for the planning of controls; checklists for controls; and a reporting system from the Regions to the CCA.

Official controls during transport

Roadside checks to monitor animal welfare during transport are carried out by the LHU-ASL in conjunction with Police and Carabinieri corps. Inspections on animals coming from other Member States are normally conducted in conjunction with the UVAC, a local office of the CCA responsible for intra-EU trade. In addition, Police, Carabinieri and Forest Guards are also involved in the implementation and enforcement of animal welfare during transport, and may perform checks, including roadside checks, on their own as well as jointly with Official Veterinarians (OV). They have the legal power to stop and inspect vehicles, check documents, assess the welfare of animals and issue sanctions.

The CCA established a system of training on the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on animal welfare during transport, including specific requirements such as those relating to partitions, individual stalls and access to water for equidae during transport.

UVAC prepare an annual general programme of checks to be performed on the basis of the checks in previous years, which requires that approximately 2% of consignments of live animals coming from intra-EU trade are inspected at the place of destination. The actual checks are delegated to the LHU-ASL. An Official Veterinarian in the UVAC decides on the consignments to be checked, on the basis of a risk assessment.

- **Controls on imported live animal and animal products**

Controls on imported animals, food of animal origin and feedingstuffs are carried out at 23 Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) which report directly to the MOH, who directly employs the veterinary staff of the BIPs as official veterinarians or as veterinarians under contract. The MOH introduced a programme for the audit of BIPs in 2005. This programme involved a detailed examination of all aspects, both operational and procedural, as well as of facilities, equipment and hygiene. Comprehensive guidelines on import controls and the annual report on activities of the BIPS are available on the Ministry website

The laboratories of IZS provide analytical services to the BIPs. The results of analyses are entered by the BIPs in TRACES and for specific checks are sent to the CCA. The evaluation of all this data by the CCA enables a review of the implementation of the plan (follow-up) each year.

- **Feedingstuffs and animal nutrition**

The CCA prepares a multi-annual (3 years) National Control Plan, which provides the basis for regional plans. The National Plan includes guidelines regarding: the development of risk-based regional plans; the selection of establishment to be subjects to control, as well as the frequency and objective of this control activity. The National Plan also contains a detailed checklists as guidance for official controls at regional and local level; some outlines of sampling priorities and compulsory sampling targets for each RVS, which together with their LVS are responsible for the implementation of the plan. If necessary, the plan could be amended by the CCA (e.g. law update, urgent situations, new problems arising, FVO recommendations).

The Regional Veterinary Services (RVS) develop regional plans based on the national plan and guidance, taking into account regional and local information on risk. The RVS may increase inspection and sampling targets, as appropriate. The CCA is responsible for approving regional plans.

The national plan includes controls on the presence of GMOs, additives, veterinary medicinal products, contaminants and feed ban. It provides for a frequency of inspections of at least once a year for all registered and approved establishments and holdings using additives, pre-mixtures of additives or medicated pre-mixtures. In other cases, the frequency of inspections is established at regional level on the risk category attributed to the FBOs.

The LHU-ASL are responsible for carrying out official inspections, sampling and on-the-spot verifications to ensure that a feed business meets the requirements for obtaining and retaining an authorization or registration.

Responsibility for the control of imported feedingstuffs is assigned to the BIPs. Controls on feedingstuffs of animal origin coming from other EU Member States are carried out by the UVAC. In specific circumstances, the CCA may also rely on the NAS capabilities of investigation and inspection to perform national surveys or targeted and unplanned inspections. These inspections are usually linked to emergencies, court proceedings or cases of illegal actions.

Approval for establishments manufacturing additives is given at CCA level. Approval and registration of other FBOs (including the primary sector) are given by the RVS. A list of approved and registered establishments is published on the MOH website.

The National Reference Centre for feedingstuffs, including for the total feed ban, is the CREAA, which is part of the IZS of Torino. The IZS Teramo is the National Reference Laboratory for dioxins and PCBs in feedingstuffs. The IZS of Padova is the National Reference Centre for Salmonellosis. The ISS is the National Reference Centre for Mycotoxins. The CREAA and the ISS were each designated by MH as NRL for additives in feedingstuffs in April 2009, in respect of specific categories of feed additives. Official analyses of feedingstuffs are performed by ten IZS laboratories.

- **Veterinary Medicinal Products (VMP) and residues**

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is responsible for issuing marketing authorizations for veterinary medicinal products, for the licensing of manufacturing, importation, authorization and for compliance with GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices). MH issues authorizations after evaluation, with the support of a consultative committee. Controls are implemented by the ASL under the coordination of the RVS, and by the NAS.

Decree of 17 December 2007 (pursuant to Article 89 of Legislative Decree 193/2006) requires that VMP packaging include a bar code containing the identification of the medicine, its expiry date and the batch number.

The RVS are responsible for the licensing of wholesalers and pharmacies. Wholesalers and pharmacies are inspected annually by the ASL. The responsibility for checks on the storage/use of veterinary medicinal products on farms and by veterinary practitioners also lies with the ASL.

The Regions are required to report annually on the results of controls undertaken at wholesalers and pharmacies.

Feedmills are authorised by the MOH to manufacture medicated feedingstuffs, following an inspection and recommendation by the Regions. These feedmills are inspected annually by the ASL.

The National Group for survey of veterinary medicines was established under Article 88 (4) of Decree 193/2006 with the objective of improving controls on the marketing of VMPs. There is a national control programme for the quality of VMPs. Samples are taken by the NAS.

Two laboratories are used for controls on marketing and use: the ISS and the IZS of Abruzzo and Molise at Teramo. As regards quality controls, is the IZS which carries out the analyses.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ITALIAN SYSTEM FOR FOOD HYGIENE AND FOOD AND NUTRITION

Italy defined the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, and the Local Health Units (ASL) as competent authorities for food safety by national Legislative Decree 193/2007 implementing EU Regulations No 852/2004, 853/2004, 854/2004 and 882/2004 and following modifications.

Controls at the establishment level are carried out by 146 Local Health Units (ASL). Even the MOH may perform inspections at local level, by carrying out audit activity through the sectorial offices of the Directorates-General. It may also carry out inspections directly, mainly in relation to specific problems or to approve some establishments for export to Third Countries. Finally, inspections may be carried out through a dedicated body of the Carabinieri (NAS).

The Ministry of Health ensures the application of the European Regulations, including the respect of the general principles reported in the General Food Law, Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 adopted on 28 January 2002. General Food Law defines common objectives, lays down general principles and legitimate objectives for food law in order to ensure a high level of health protection and the effective function of the internal market. Below are reported some examples of provisions set out in EU Regulation 178/2002. The check of the food safety requirements, the definition of the Competent Authorities and the Food Business Operators' responsibilities, the insurance of the traceability principle "*from farm to fork*" and the implementation of the withdrawal, recall and notification for food and feed not complying with food and feed requirements.

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) is the key instrument for ensuring a rapid transmission of information to Member States when risks to public health are detected in the food chain. In this way, many food safety risks are detected before they could create damages to European consumers.

• **Plan for chemical and pharmacological residues analysis in food**

The DGISAN issues the National Plan for Residues every year, with the cooperation of Regions and Autonomous Provinces, National Reference Laboratories and Zooprophyllactic Institutes (IZS).

The National Residue Monitoring Plan for residues (hereinafter referred to as "NRMP") is a plan that monitor the breeding animals process and the primary processing of animal origin products.

The aim of the Plan is to reveal cases of illegal administration of prohibited substances and misuse of authorized substances, and to verify the conformity of residues of veterinary drugs, pesticides and contaminants to the environment with the maximum residue limits set out by EU and national laws.

The NRMP has been structured taking into account the requirements of Legislative Decree No. 158 of 16 March 2006 and subsequent modifications, implementing Directives 96/22/CE and 96/23/CE and subsequent amendments, and Decisions 97/747/CE and 98/179/CE regarding levels and frequencies of collecting sample and the procedure for the official collection and handling of the samples.

The NRMP defines species, categories, points of sampling, substances to look for, test procedures according to the European Commission's legal provisions and indications.

In order to stress the need "*to take every precautions to guarantee that surprise in controls is constant*" and to not prejudice the effectiveness of the Plan, the Regional Services are invited to avoid dissemination of detailed information of specific researches to be performed in different ASL, publishing the whole Regional Plan.

According to articles 11-13 of Legislative Decree No 158 of 16 March 2006, the Ministry must transmit to the European Commission, by 31 March of each year, the NRMP updated for the current

year, the results and information on measures adopted related to the previous NRMP. Moreover, every six months, the Ministry must inform the European Commission and the other Member States on the implementation and the results of the Plan.

- **National Plan for the official control on the presence of GMOs in food**

The national coordinating plan defines the activities of the official control in Italy and establishes the import controls on GMOs foods in order to ensure the compliance with specific regulations, in particular with the labeling requirements. In collaboration with the National Reference Centre (CROGM), the DGISAN issues a plan for the detection of GMOs in food.

- **Food Contact Materials**

Food Contact Materials (FCM) are materials and items intended to come into contact with food and water (i.e. kitchen utensils, tableware, vessels and containers, packaging, film etc.). National and European measures establish specific rules for FCM, with the purpose of ensuring food safety by preventing the chemical migration from material to food. The standard framework is the EU Regulation 1935/2004 setting out general requirements, while other specific rules for individual materials (ceramics, plastic etc.) are detailed in other provisions.

- **National Plan for the official control on foods and food ingredients treated with ionizing radiation**

The treatment with ionizing radiation breaks down the bacterial load. It is not often used in Italy, but when this treatment is done, it is carried out in accordance with the regulations and it must be indicated on the label. At EU level, Italy contributes significantly to the collection of data control.

- **Control system for plant protection products (PPP) and residues**

The DGISAN is responsible for safety of plant protection products by verifying the authorization and control of the marketing, for the use of plant protection products and for the planning of official control on residues in vegetables. The EC Regulation No 396/2005 establishes criteria for the official controls on pesticide residues in food. A National Plan is issued every year taking into account the results of controls of the previous years, and it establishes the number of samples that must be collected in the market. The Ministry sends the results to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

- **Nutrition and nutrition education**

The DGISAN is responsible for nutrition and related diseases, nutrition and sport, breastfeeding, iodoprofilaxys, labelling and claims, catering services, Nutritional Rehabilitation (RN) in the treatment of eating disorders. The current scientific literature demonstrates that there exist a link, a cause-effect relationship between an incorrect and unhealthy nutrition and the onset of chronic diseases (hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers), which are the most relevant causes of death. Therefore, investing in health is not a cost but an opportunity, and a proper nutrition and healthy lifestyle from childhood are predictive of better health in adulthood. Eating habits can influence such emerging problems, so the MOH developed initiatives to improve the nutritional status of the population, just starting from the childhood. Through specific campaigns, it tries to limit the consumption of unhealthy food containing saturated fat, sugars and salt. Food labeling is a very significant issue, which aims to ensure that consumers are provided with comprehensive information on the content and composition of the products, so as to protect their health. Regulation (EU) 1169/2011 providing food information to consumers (FIC) is still under discussion at European level.

- **Foods for Specific Groups of the population, Food Supplements, Food Additives and Novel foods.**

Foods for Specific Groups of the population, Food Supplements, Food Additives and Novel foods - given their particular intended use or nature, these products are subject to special rules in addition to the general rules on hygiene and safety.

In particular:

- Food for specific groups - FSG (former food for particular nutritional uses) are covered by Regulation (EU) 609/2013 and Legislative Decree 111/92, implementing Directive 89/398 / EEC, as modified by Directive 2009/39/EC.
- Food supplement covered by Legislative Decree 169/2004, implementing EC Directive 2002/46.
- Food added with vitamins, minerals and certain other substances covered by Regulation (EC) 1925/2006.
- Novel food covered by Regulation (EC) 258/97.

The DGISAN is the competent authority in charge of receiving the notification of food for specific groups, food supplements and food added with vitamins and minerals. In particular, each notified product is evaluated in order to verify the compliance to the composition, the specific labelling requirements and the use of claims under Reg. (CE) 1924/2006.

The DGISAN is also the competent authority in charge of evaluating the authorization procedure for novel foods. According to the Reg. (CE) 258/97, novel food are foods not consumed to a significant degree in the European Union prior to 15 May 1997 and, in order to prove their safety, they have to obtain the authorization before marketing.

One of the primary objective of the Ministry of Health is to protect consumers, with particular regards to vulnerable groups of population such as infants and young children, by ensuring appropriate nutritional composition and safety of foods, as well as appropriate consumer information.

Finally, the Ministry of Health is deeply involved in the evolution of the European legislation on these products.

- **Import Controls on Non-Animal Origin Products (USMAF)**

Offices for Maritime, Air and Border Health of the Ministry (USMAF), under Regulation (EC) 882/2004, carry out official controls on imports of all consignments of plant products for human consumption, as well as on food additives, flavorings and food contact materials. These offices operates a quality system, according to standard operating procedures that ensure unified, equal or equivalent approach.

- **Export**

The DGISAN ensures the compliance of foodstuffs exported to Third Countries. In this way, it ensure the implementation of all sanitary requirements setting by the European regulations and/ or additional requirements requested by Third Countries which imports Italian products. This activity consists in the management of the lists of establishments authorized for export and related IT systems; the issue of guidelines and application notes regulating the export of foodstuffs; the inspection relating to certification and maintenance of qualifications for exporting establishments; the assistance to the audits conducted by Third Countries and promotion of training courses on export requirements.

COORDINATION WITH ALL THE AUTHORITIES IN THE FIELD OF FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY, THE MULTIANNUAL NATIONAL CONTROL PLAN (MANCP)

The Directorate-General for food hygiene and safety and nutrition of the Ministry of Health coordinates the orientation and planning as concerns food and feed safety, food quality, animal health and welfare and plant health, through the four-year plan (MANCP) and the Annual Report. The MANCP (as defined for the purposes of Regulation (EC) 882/2004) describes the strategy of Member States in order to guarantee efficient controls and the preservation of the respect of food legislation by operators. It includes a description of competent authorities, general organization and management of official controls and different control systems. The objectives of the MANCP are pursued in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment, the Customs Agency, the Regions and several Police corps operating in the field of health protection, environmental protection, agriculture, agri-food and fisheries, and finally on financial interest in the food activities.

The MANCP ensures the verification of compliance and the effectiveness of official controls with the requirements for feed and food law, animal health and welfare rules. It ensures effective controls and allows to allocate resources in areas at high risk, where the maximum impact is expected. The annual report is published on website of MOH and it provides an overall evaluation of the official controls and audit system.

FIGHTING FOOD FRAUD

Although the Italian legislation does not define the "food fraud", the fraudulent behaviors are codified in the criminal code and other special laws.

Food fraud refers to different illicit behaviors, such as adulteration and counterfeiting of food substances; trade of counterfeit or adulterated foodstuff and/or use in the preparation, selling, holding or otherwise distribution for consumption of food substances not compliant to the food law. Violations related to incorrect labelling and lack of transparency, as well as advertising for food that does not guarantee a specific consumer information. Fraudulent trading and sale of non-genuine food items as genuine are punishable by law.

In some cases, Italian legislation foresees criminal sanctions for behaviors recognized as food fraud. The criminal sanctions may be fines, suspension of the commercial activity, closure of the premise and other measures. In all cases the illicit items are confiscated. The amount of the sanctions is defined by the judge depending on the specific conduct and the severity of the violation.

Finally, according to a law in force in Italy, the Ministry of Health publishes a [List](#) of companies and producers that have been convicted by final judgment for crimes of fraud and food adulteration

As agreed at the end of the International Conference held in Rome on 23-24 October 2014, "*Food Fraud, a joint effort to ensure the safety and integrity of our food*" at the presence of the Italian Minister of Health, the following bullet point were identified as effective to fight food fraud:

1. to develop a definition of "food fraud" to be included in European legislation, in compliance with the judicial systems of Member States
2. to ensure adequate training for the staff of the competent authorities involved in official controls in the agri-food chain, focused on investigative techniques of police authorities, which identify fraudulent practices in a timely manner.
3. to ensure that specific controls, aimed at identifying possible fraudulent practices, are carried out along the entire agri-food chain, in addition to official controls planned and performed according to Regulation (EC) 882/2004.

4. to implement, in each Member State, all measures and tools necessary to develop an effective and operational collaboration among all stakeholders (competent and judicial authorities and police bodies), including a rapid exchange of data and information relating to possible food frauds.
5. to guarantee that competent authorities implement, with increasing efficiency, the rules on cooperation and administrative assistance provided for in the current European legislation on official controls (Title VI of Regulation (EC) 882/2004) to ensure an effective and prompt exchange of information and data to facilitate cross-border investigations and prompt adoption of corrective measures.
6. to promote and support the European Commission initiatives aimed at establishing networks for a rapid exchange of information with Third Countries about goods and animals entering or leaving the European Union regarding suspected fraudulent practices to allow for an increased level of official controls for imports and exports.
7. to promote and support initiatives of the European Commission to set up information systems for the collection and management of data on official controls carried out along the agri-food chain, in order to create a permanent monitoring facility. This will help with the detection of anomalous patterns in the agri-food chain and in turn with a timely identification of possible fraudulent practices to be promptly shared with police bodies and European and national judicial authorities.
8. to promote partnerships and cooperation among stakeholders, including food business operators, and exploit their experience in preventing and discovering fraudulent behaviors and practices.
9. to ensure the creation of systems and networks to collect useful information from business operators, even confidentially, about possible fraudulent practices to share with police bodies.
10. to ensure that food fraud penalties have a deterrent effect, severely impacting on profits illegally sought or obtained.

