

**Question for written answer E-003149/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Anne Delvaux (PPE)

Subject: Banned imports of mutton

On Tuesday 19 March 2013, the French health authorities announced the discovery of 57 tonnes of banned imports of British mutton in an agri-food company which had already come under fire at the beginning of February in the European horsemeat scandal.

Analyses have shown that the meat recovered had been obtained using a mechanical method for processing animal carcasses which produces a finished product known as 'mechanically separated meat' (MSM). This process – which is banned but still used in this case – involves scraping the bone to get the meat, but also nerves or muscle from the animal.

However, Regulation (EC) No 1923/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 amending Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, states explicitly that '[the] bones of bovine, ovine and caprine animals from countries or regions with a controlled or undetermined BSE risk shall not be used for the production of mechanically separated meat (MSM)'. Furthermore, Commission communication (COM(2010)0704) also states that 'the use of bones or bone-in cuts of bovine, ovine and caprine animals is prohibited in all Member States for the production of MSM'. Two months after the scandal of horsemeat found in lasagnes, we find ourselves once again faced with the evasion of legislation but, on top of this, Europe is again running the risk of a health scandal.

In this case, it is the European Food and Veterinary Office which is responsible. Its mission, through its audits, inspections and related activities, is to check on compliance with the requirements of EU food safety and quality, animal health and welfare and plant health legislation within the European Union and on compliance with EU import requirements in third countries exporting to the EU.

Have audits already been carried out on the 'MSM' process? If so, what were the conclusions of those audits?

Are these standard practices?

In this case, what measures does the Commission plan to take for consumers and against fraudulent agri-food companies?