



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
**A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues**

**Briefing session n° 12:**  
**The role of livestock for ACP countries: Challenges and opportunities ahead**

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**The EU's import policy for animals and products of animal origin**

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*Executive Summary*

The main objectives of the EU health legislation are to ensure firstly a high level of safety in relation to public, animal and plant health in the EU and secondly that trade and imports in animals and their products can take place in safe conditions. The EU conditions relating to imports are equivalent to those for domestic producers, thus all food imports must conform to our standards, irrespective of its origins. The EU does have effective and science based food safety standards needed to prevent introduction of animal and plant diseases bearing in mind there are serious consumer concerns about food safety issues and the need to protect the high animal health status of the EU which must be balanced against the need for the EU to trade and import.

The EU follows WTO rules and the SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) Agreement which follows OIE & CODEX standards. In addition it is scientifically based with the European Food Safety Authority (in Parma, Italy) giving scientific advice to the Commission and to Member States as needed.

In order for a third country to import into the EU the veterinary services i.e. the controlling and certifying authority needs to be assessed by an on the spot inspection following which the country may be approved for import into the Community of animals and/or products of animal origin. Training to help countries may also be provided.

The EU is often accused of having too strict rules for its imports however this is not the case. Indeed wherever possible mitigating measures may be taken for disease control purposes such as zoning and compartmentalisation, heat treatment or other physical treatments, de-boning and maturation, channelled imports for a specific end use, vector free period, quarantine and testing. However one of the most important factors to gain approval to export to the EU is the reliance and confidence in the systems and guarantees for veterinary certification provided by those countries exporting to the EU.