



submitted for obtaining EU financial contribution

Annex II: Control programme – Reduction of prevalence of Salmonella serotypes in certain poultry populations

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Document version number: 2022 1.0

Member state : MALTA

Disease Salmonella

Animal population Laying flocks of Gallus gallus

This program is multi annual :

Request of Union co-financing from beginning :

1. Contact data

Name Phone

Email Your job type within the CA :

Submission Date

12/08/2022 11:26:31

Submission Number

1660296393683-18837



Laying flocks of *Gallus gallus*

A. Technical information

By submitting this programme, the Member State (MS) attests that the relevant provisions of the EU legislation will be implemented during its entire period of approval, in particular:

- Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 on the control of *Salmonella* and other specified food-borne zoonotic agents,
- Regulation (EU) No 517/2011 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards a Union target for the reduction of the prevalence of *Salmonella* serotypes in laying hens of *Gallus gallus*,
- Regulation (EC) No 1177/2006 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 as regards requirements for the use of specific control methods in the framework of the national programmes for the control of *Salmonella* in poultry.

As a consequence, the following measures will be implemented during the whole period of the programme:

1. Aim of the programme

It is to implement all relevant measures in order to reduce the prevalence of *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium (including the serotypes with the antigenic formula 1,4,[5],12:i:-) in adult laying hens of *Gallus gallus* ('Union target') as follows:

- An annual minimum percentage of reduction of positive flocks of adult laying hens equal to at least 10% where the prevalence in the preceding year was less than 10%.
- An annual minimum percentage of reduction of positive flocks of adult laying hens equal to at least 20% where the prevalence in the preceding year was more than or equal to 10% and less than 20%.
- A reduction of the maximum percentage equal to 2% or less of positive flocks of adult laying hens.
- The Member States has less than 50 flocks of adult laying hens: the target is to have not more than one adult flock remaining positive.

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The Union target shall be achieved every year based on the monitoring of the previous year.

Comments(max. 32000 chars) :

In 2020, there were 30 operational farms with a total of 142 flocks. Only 20 farms have a capacity of over 350 birds, hence the remaining ten are not fully commercial. The different houses on a holding are considered as individual flocks. Twelve of the flocks have a capacity of 1000 birds and over. Malta started implementing the SNCP in 2009 and has been very successful in reducing the percentage of positive flocks from 13.22% in 2010 to 1.6% in 2016. At this stage, having just an average of 140 flocks, the achievement of the Union target is challenging and in 2020 the percentage increased by 7.04%. Owing to the restrictive availability of space and the presence of multiple small houses; quite a number of operators follow the first-in first-out system of production. This renders the interpretation of the definition of 'flock' difficult.

Multi-age flocks:

All batches found in the same house are considered as one flock since they are sharing the same airspace as per definition found in Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003, Article 2, Paragraph 3(b). Usually houses where different age groups are mixed would be using cage rearing systems and there would be no fences between the batches, however birds of different ages, would be placed in separate cages. There is no identification between different age groups. The CA relies on what the farmer has declared, however all batches on the farm are registered in the Intratrace animal livestock database on the day the chicks/pullets are purchased. Thus from this system the CA has all the information of the different batches present on the farm. The sampling approach in houses with multi-age groups is sampling every 15 weeks in the laying phase. Pullets in these houses are sampled for the first time at the age of 24 weeks +/-2weeks as per Commission Regulation (EU) 517/2011 Annex, 2, 2.1 Paragraph 2, or two weeks prior to moving to their laying unit as per table found in Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003, Annex 2, B, Part 1, thereafter they are sampled every 15 weeks with the rest of the batches.

2. The programme will be implemented on the **whole territory** of the MS.

yes

no

If No, please explain :

Laying flocks of Gallus gallus

3. Flocks subject to the programme

The programme covers all flocks of adult laying hens of *Gallus gallus* but does not apply to flocks for private domestic use or leading to the direct supply, by the producer, of small quantities of table eggs to the final consumer or to local retail establishments directly supplying the eggs to the final consumer. For the latter case (direct supply), national rules are adopted ensuring *Salmonella* control in these flocks. The programme covers also all rearing flocks of future laying hens.

yes

no

If No, please explain :

	Total number of flocks of layers in the MS	Number of flocks covered by the programme	Number of flocks where FBO sampling shall take place	Number of flocks where official sampling will take place
Rearing flocks	28		26	6
Adult flocks	64	64	64	19
Number of holdings with more than 1,000 laying hens				19
Number of flocks in these holdings				48
<i>NB : All cells shall be filled in with the best estimation available.</i>				

Comments (max. 32000 chars) :

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4. Notification of the detection of target *Salmonella* serovars

A procedure is in place which guarantees that the detection of the presence of the relevant *Salmonella* serotypes during sampling at the initiative of the food business operator (FBO) is notified without delay to the competent authority by the laboratory performing the analyses. Timely notification of the detection of the presence of any of the relevant *Salmonella* serotypes remains the responsibility of the food business operator and the laboratory performing the analyses.

yes

no

if no, please explain :

Currently the Food Business Operators are responsible for notification of positive results. VRD is working on a memorandum of understanding with the private labs involved in the *Salmonella* test. In the different areas of responsibility it will be included that the private labs are obliged to provide the result to the CA and to the FBOs

5. Biosecurity measures

FBOs have to implement measures to prevent the contamination of their flocks.

yes

no

if no, please explain. If yes, please describe the biosecurity measures that shall be applied, quote the document describing them (if any) (max. 32000 chars) :

In Malta a national legislation is in force for providing general rules for the eradication of salmonella in broiler and laying hen flocks (Veterinary Services Act SL 104). The regulation refers to the control measures stated in the EU legislation and provides rules for the producer eligibility for compensation, including biosecurity measures. The mentioned national legislation states that "the producer shall follow all advices and recommendations regarding biosecurity measures to prevent salmonella infection" and the compensation of infected flocks is connected to the presence of proper biosecurity measures, a biosecurity programme is not officially requested to the farmers except for breeding animal farms (Animal Welfare Act SL 119/2005).

No farm has separate entrances. It is recommended that preferably, vehicles should not enter a farm. The use of a pressure-washer for the wheels is highly recommended.

• Personnel on farm:

A high percentage of farms are small in capacity and are family-run, therefore few people would be responsible for the daily management of the animals. There is no legal obligation for people handling live animals to carry out medical checks. The larger holdings have employees.

• Pest control (mice, rats and birds) is generally addressed through the use of nets on the windows, correct maintenance of building structures and the use of venom.

In 2020 a training course was organized for the farmers with the aim of improving their knowledge on

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the good hygiene practices and on the measures foreseen within the control programmes. During this training course, the need of biosecurity measures were detailed and a video detailing proper cleaning and disinfection practices was shown. Leaflets were also distributed regarding the general rules for biosecurity, general hygiene and good husbandry of the animals was distributed. Biosecurity guidelines were placed on the website of the Department. These guidelines deal with hygiene and biosecurity measures (e.g. disinfection facilities at the entrance of the farm, clean area around the holdings, usage of separate clothes, separate area for the storage of tools, proper feed storage, disinfection of the holdings before the introduction of new animals).

Local legislation relevant to Compensation for Salmonella infection under the SNCP, takes into consideration the biosecurity measures applied on the holding. If measures are not in place, there would be a reduction of the compensation is calculated. FBOs have become motivated and are very conscious of the importance to respect biosecurity measures.

6. Minimum sampling requirements for food business operators (FBO):

Samples at the initiative of the FBOs will be taken and analysed to test for the target *Salmonella* serovars respecting the following minimum sampling requirements:

- a. Rearing flocks: day-old chicks, two weeks before moving to laying phase or laying unit
- b. Adults laying flocks: every 15 weeks during the laying period

yes

no

if no, please explain - Indicate also who takes the FBO samples, and, if additional FBO sampling, going beyond the minimum sampling requirements, is performed, please describe what is done.

Around 8-9 FBO's carry out own checks.

a. The day-olds are still sampled and checked by the CA. When these are imported as day-olds from other MS, the day-olds are sampled at the trade post. In this case, chick liners and any dead chicks (10/consignment) are sampled by the support staff. This is not a common occurrence. The FBO prefer to import point-of-lay pullets which would be then sampled on farm. In this case, two faecal samples are taken from each flock.

b. Adult laying hens: two faecal samples are taken per flock present on the holding. There are very few barn houses and from these, boot swabs are collected. There are no free-range farms.

Only the FBO trained by the CA are permitted to sample, otherwise the sampling is carried out by the CA. An SOP detailing the procedure of sampling based on the Regulation is available. The support staff under the CA responsible for the on-farm sampling, have undergone training on sampling techniques and biosecurity measures on different occasions. In 2020, training sessions in sampling techniques under the SNCP, were organized by the CA for business operators. Attendance certificates were issued. When carrying out own-checks, the operator has to fill in the official sampling sheet provided by the CA with all details relevant to the samples. This has to be signed and submitted to the NVL, within a few days after sampling together with a culled layer hen taken from one of the houses just sampled.

Antimicrobial residue screening analysis is carried out by the NVL on muscle tissue sample using the six-plate test. This way the CA can cross-check the information supplied with the Intratrace.

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7. Samples are taken in accordance with provisions of point 2.2 of Annex to Regulation (EU) No 517/2011

yes

no

if no, please explain :

8. Specific requirements laid down in Annex II.D of Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 will be complied with where relevant. In particular:

- due to the presence or the suspicion of the presence of SE or ST (including monophasic ST I,4,[5],12:i:-) in the flock, eggs cannot be used for human consumption unless heat treated;
- eggs from these flocks shall be marked and considered as class B eggs.

yes

no

if no, please explain - Indicate also if prompt depopulation of the infected flocks is compulsory.

Flocks suspected of or found to be positively infected with the targeted serovars are placed under official restrictions and no eggs, poultry or poultry meat will be permitted to be moved from the infected house without authorisation from the CA. A census is carried out within a few days from official restriction on the holding by officials from the CA, to verify the size of the infected flock/s.

Destination of products:

Eggs originating from positive flocks are not sold as fresh eggs but have to be either destroyed or heat-treated. Officials from the Competent Authority (CA) are to carry out regular (generally daily) on-site checks to verify the number of Class B eggs produced and that biosecurity measures are respected. All records of this census are kept at the CA. If the operator chooses to go for heat-treatment. The eggs are generally sent to Italy to a heat-treating facility since there is no heat-treating facility on the Island. The eggs are stored over a few days at the holding and not permitted to be moved from the premises. When the eggs are dispatched, an Intra-trade document is issued by the CA and signed by the Official Veterinarian. This option is rarely chosen; it was found not to be cost-effective, once the cost of packaging and transport is deducted.

Generally the operator decides to destroy the eggs, they are placed in approved leak-proof bins and transported in approved vehicles to the only Thermal facility Unit present on the Island for incineration. At the Thermal facility records of the weight of material incinerated is produced and passed on to the Poultry Unit at the CA. The Ca may verified with the records obtained from the checks carried out on-

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farm.

9.If birds from flocks infected with SE or ST are slaughtered, please describe the measures that shall be implemented by the FBO and the CA to ensure that fresh poultry meat meet the relevant **EU microbiological criteria** (row 1.28 of Chapter 1 of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005): absence of SE/ST in 5 samples of 25g:

Measures implemented by the FBO (farm level)

If the case should arise that a flock of infected laying-hens is to be slaughtered for human consumption:

a) The owner has to respect the restrictive measures. The entry of vehicles and personnel on the infected holding is to be restricted and strict biosecurity measures (protective clothing, boots, the use of foot baths and disinfection pits for vehicles) have to be respected to avoid spreading of infection out of the holding and between different houses.

b) The operator is to inform the CA on the date or dates of slaughter. Information of the Salmonella status has to appear on the food chain information form which the operator submits to the slaughterhouse.

Measures implemented by the FBO (slaughterhouse level)

Once the infected flock arrives at the slaughterhouse, the crates have to be washed and disinfected properly.

b) The slaughter house has to include in its HACCP plan, the procedure and precautions to take when slaughtering Salmonella infected flock or flocks of unknown Salmonella status.

The slaughter batch of infected flock have to be slaughtered at the end of a slaughter day or on their own, without other birds from other flocks being slaughtered afterwards.

Cleaning and disinfection after slaughter has to be carried out with utmost care.

c) The slaughterhouse will take samples in accordance to the Annex of Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1086/2011. A copy of the result of the analysis has to be submitted immediately to the CA.

d) The animal by products produced are collected in bins. These bins are supplied by the Thermal Facility. The feathers and green offals are collected in separate bins. The by-products are Category 2 and their collection is controlled and verified by the officer in charge of animal by-products.

e) If the poultry carcasses are to be processed, then the processing plant is to ensure and verify that the batch number of the processed products can be traced back to the origin. The processing plant has to comply with CR (EU) No. 1086/2011 and carry out analysis in accordance to this Regulation.

f) If Salmonella spp. is isolated from the neck skins, the serovar has to be typed. If serotyping results in identification of SE or ST, the slaughterhouse has to implement the measures requested by the CA.

Measures implemented by the CA (farm and slaughterhouse level)

a) Once the infected flock arrives at the slaughterhouse, the crates have to be washed and disinfected

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properly.

b) The slaughter house has to include in its HACCP plan, the procedure and precautions to take when slaughtering Salmonella infected flock or flocks of unknown Salmonella status.

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10. Laboratories in which samples (official and FBO samples) collected within this programme are analysed are accredited to ISO 17025 standard and the analytical methods for *Salmonella* detection is within the scope of their accreditation.

yes

no

If no, please explain :

VRD is the authorizing authority

11. The **analytical methods** used for the detection of the target *Salmonella* serovars is the one defined in Part 3.2 of the Annex of Regulation (EU) No 200/2010 i.e. Amendment 1 of EN/ISO 6579-2002/Amd1:2007. '*Microbiology of food and animal feeding stuffs - Horizontal method for the detection of Salmonella spp. -- Amendment 1: Annex D: Detection of Salmonella spp. in animal faeces and in environmental samples from the primary production stage*'.

Serotyping is performed following the Kaufman-White-Le Minor scheme.

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yes

no

If no please explain.

the test method used by the lab is the updated ISO standard SM-EN ISO 6579-1: 2017 / Amd 1: 2020 (E).

For samples taken on behalf of the FBO alternative methods if validated in accordance with the most recent version of EN/ISO16140 may be used.

yes

no

If no please explain.

Currently all private laboratories which are performing the private analysis for FBOs are all ISO 17025 accredited, with the Salmonella method in their scope of accreditation.

12. Samples are transported and stored in accordance with point 3.1 of the Annex to Regulation (EU) No 517/2011. In particular, samples examination shall start in the laboratory within 4 days after sampling.

yes

no

If no, please explain :

13. Please describe the **official controls at feed level** (including sampling).

Comments (max. 32000 chars) :

Official controls at feed -level:

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There are four large feed mills (two small feed mills had ceased production and are distributing packaged feeds from EU). These source and produce the majority of feed supplied to local farms. The feed mills source premixes and concentrates from approved EU countries (predominantly UK). These are then mixed with other ingredients such as cereals and soya imported predominately from EU. A small number of farms carry out home mixing.

To date all of the feed mills carry out their own sampling, and have samples tested at accredited labs in EU.

Official visits are carried out on all feed mills and also the home mixers. The large commercial companies have an HACCP programme in place and are visited at least once annually by CA officials.

Documentation regarding auto-control checks are verified during official controls. The CA also runs an annual sampling programme on feeds, whereby official samples are collected from all the major feedmills. The sampling programme includes residue analysis but also analysis for Salmonella spp. An average of ten to twelve samples are collected for salmonella testing from the feed mills. Random sampling, is also carried out on some of the home mixers. In 2020, there were no positive samples collected for Salmonella isolation under the national control programme on commercial feed mills.

14. Official controls at holding, flock and hatchery level

- a. Please describe the official checks concerning the **general hygiene provisions** (Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004) including checks on biosecurity measures, and consequences in case of unsatisfactory outcome.

(max. 32000 chars) :

Routine veterinary inspection on farms:

According to national legislation, "The Veterinary Service Act, Chapter 437 of 2001, article 35 (f) states that "the owner, the keeper, the dealer or the importer, the consignee, the carrier, the retailer or any other person authorised under the provisions of this Act shall notify the veterinary services of any suspicion of zoonosis or other diseases or any other phenomenon or circumstances liable to present a serious threat to animal or public health." The Animal Welfare Act 439 regulates welfare issues.

Local farms being generally small in capacity, do not have their own private veterinarian visiting on a regular basis but only in case of necessity. One of the largest local feed mills provides free technical support. A lot of the farmers buying their feed from this feed mill make regular use of the technical personnel. If there is any cause for suspicion, the company's veterinarian is then called out. There is no delegation of official control of poultry in Malta.

Since the SNCP has been implemented, the vast majority of sampling under the framework of the legislation has been carried by the CA. Any official control is carried out by auxiliaries under the supervision of the OV, when the OV cannot perform himself the official control. From the beginning of the programme, the officers conduct an animal welfare check list at least once annually per registered farm. A biosecurity check-list, common to all commercial flocks is also filled in once annually. Every check-list is a control document.

Any non-compliance follows the internal SOP for enforcement. The enforcement measures consist of: verbal and written improvement notice, Corrective action request with deadline, warning letter,

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Fine and finally suspension and or revocation of license.

b. Routine official **sampling scheme**: EU minimum requirements are implemented i.e. official sampling are performed:

- in one flock per year per holding comprising at least 1,000 birds;
- at the age of 24 +/- 2 weeks in laying flocks housed in buildings where the relevant Salmonella was detected in the preceding flock;
- in any case of suspicion of Salmonella infection when investigating food-borne outbreaks in accordance with Article 8 of Directive 2003/99/EC or any cases where the competent authority considers it appropriate, using the sampling protocol laid down in point 4(b) of Part D to Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003;
- in all other laying flocks on the holding in case Salmonella Enteritidis or Salmonella Typhimurium is detected in one laying flock on the holding;
- in cases where the competent authority considers it appropriate.

yes

no

If no, please explain. - Indicate also 1)if additional official sampling going beyond EU minimum requirements is performed give a description of what is done 2)who is taking the official samples

Official controls at flock-level:

All registered and functioning layer flocks as described in the NCP, on both Malta and Gozo , are sampled.

The CA, to date , has been carrying out the majority of sampling described in point 2.1 of the Annex of Commission Regulation (EC) No 517/2011, this means that the CA carries out both official and non-official sampling of most layer farms. Any sampling and testing carried out by the CA on behalf of the FBO is financed by state budget.

Two veterinary support officers are responsible for sampling on poultry farms. They have been trained in sampling techniques as per Regulation requirements. they also take blood samples for Avian Influenza monitoring and residue analysis samples. These samples fall under the Animal Unit and are supervised by the OV incharge of the Poultry Section. Official Samples to be taken are in accordance to Annex point 2.1 (a) to (e) of CR No. 517/2011.

Targeted age-groups:

Official Samples to be taken

(i) Day-olds (when available since operators are preferring to get point-of-lay flocks). These are generally sampled at the BIP.

(ii) Pullets

Laying flocks of Gallus gallus

2 weeks prior to caged laying flocks:

Pullets usually enter into laying around 20 weeks, therefore the birds will be sampled around 18 weeks.

2x150g of naturally pooled faeces from belts

2 dust samples: (100g in 250ml) or 1 dust + 1 sample of 150g naturally pooled faeces.

1bird from one house is tested for antibiotic residue

(ii) Laying hens:

(a) One layer flock per holding having a capacity of at least 1000 birds.

(b) on other layer flocks in a holding where a positive Salmonella Enteritidis and Salmonella Typhimurium was identified, up to six-months prior.

(c) In case of suspicion of Salmonella infection when investigating foodborne outbreaks.

In the case of official samples taken by authorized and trained personnel of the CA, two faecal samples of at least 150gramms each and two dust samples of 100gramms each are collected per house sampled. If dust samples cannot be collected, additional faecal samples are collected instead. The provisions of sampling are always according to provisions of point 2.2 of Annex to Regulation (EU) No 517/2011. The two faecal samples are pooled into one sample and the two dust samples are pooled into one sample. once during the laying period (on all flocks having at least 1,000 birds) and all other flocks on a holding where Salmonella Enteritidis and Salmonella Typhimurium were isolated:

2x150g of naturally pooled faeces from belts

2 dust samples: (100g in 250ml) or 1 dust + 1 naturally pooled faeces

1 bird tested for antibiotic residues

c. Official confirmatory sampling (in addition to the confirmatory samples at the holding which are systematically performed if FBO or official samples are positive at the hatchery):

After positive official samples at the holding

Always

Sometimes (criteria apply)

Never

After positive FBO samples at the holding

Always

Sometimes (criteria apply)

Never

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When official confirmatory sampling is performed, additional samples are taken for checking the presence of antimicrobials:



Always



Sometimes



Never

Please insert any comments. Describe the criteria used to determine if confirmatory sampling is performed. Indicate also which samples (if any) are taken to check the presence of antimicrobials.

1	2	3	4
For routine samples taken at the holding	No of flocks positive to SE / ST	Out of the flocks in column 2, No of cases where official confirmatory samples ³ were taken	Out of the cases in column 3, No of cases where confirmatory samples were negative
FBO samples ¹	0	0	0
Official samples ²	10	0	0

¹ Reg 517/2011, point 2.2.1 of the Annex

² Reg 517/2011, point 2.2.2 of the Annex

³ Reg 2160/2003, point II.D.4 of the Annex

What happened to the flocks counted under 4 (re checked for the presence of Salmonella? Checked for the presence of antimicrobials?) (max. 32000 chars):

Malta checks all the flocks within the same premises

d. Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 1177/2006 (**antimicrobials** shall not be used as a specific method to control *Salmonella* in poultry): please describe the official controls implemented (documentary checks, sampletaking) to check the correct implementation of this provision. For samples please describe the samples taken, the analytical method used, the result of the tests.

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Comments - Describe also if any other measures are implemented(max. 32000 chars) :

One bird per holding is tested for antimicrobials. In case of non compliance a warning letter is sent to the farmer and a Joint inspection will be performed on farm by the Animal health unit the animal nutrition and feed unit and the enforcement unit. The number of sampling for that particular residue will be increased according an updated risk assessment and categorization.

15. Salmonella vaccination

Voluntary

Compulsory

Forbidden

Use of *Salmonella* vaccines is in compliance with provisions of Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No 1177/2006.

yes

no

If no, please explain. - If performed please describe the vaccination scheme (vaccines used, vaccines providers, target flocks, number of doses administered per bird, etc) (max. 32000 chars) :

The CA is also responsible of the registration of veterinary drugs and vaccines. Only those live vaccines that can be bacteriologically detected from the live strain, will be permitted to be registered. From 2011, vaccination of new flocks was mandatory. The CA has approved the use of two live vaccines (Avi pro of Lohmann and Merial) that have to be used in accordance to the recommendations of the producer. The birds are given three doses, as day-olds, at 7 weeks and 13 weeks.

Any point-of-lay pullets imported had to be certified as vaccinated with live vaccines approved by the CA.

The vaccination has to be carried out under veterinary supervision and only those flocks with a veterinary certificate will be recorded.

vaccination was not mandatory since 2012 once the seroprevalence was under 10%.

The sampling sheet issued by the CA contains the information on vaccination.

Currently the laboratories participating in the SCP are unable to perform the procedure to distinguish wild-type strains of salmonella from vaccine strains. If the need arises, the isolates have to be sent to another laboratory. Restrictive measures are implemented on the flock and the egg in the circumstances, when there is the necessity to verify if a strain isolated is a vaccine strain or wild-type strain until a result is obtained.

16. System for **compensation to owners** for the value of their birds slaughtered or culled and the eggs destroyed or heat treated.

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Describe the system for compensation to owners. Indicate also how improper implementation of biosecurity measures can affect the payment of compensation (max. 32000 chars) :

The Legal notice under the Veterinary Services Act Chapter 437: LN 255 of 2012 titled "Measures for the Eradication of Salmonella Regulations, 2012" has the compensation rates applicable for 2012. New rates are going to be published for the current year.

The LN provides a deduction in compensation rates depending on the biosecurity conditions and also if the FBO has already had a positive flock in the past.

There is a link in the national legislation between compensation and prompt slaughtering/culling

17. Please describe the official procedure to test, after the depopulation of an infected flock, the **efficacy of the disinfection** of a poultry house (No of samples, No of tests, samples taken, etc).

(max. 32000 chars) :

ifting of restrictions and re-population permitted only once environmental samples result negative to Salmonella spp. isolation, after thorough cleaning and disinfection.

Cleaning and disinfection commences as soon as the animals have been killed and removed from the shed. Detailed procedures have been laid down in the guidelines distributed during the 2010 session. Attention should be given to areas and equipment difficult to reach. Fans, drains, slats etc should not be neglected. After thorough cleaning (steam cleaning is recommended) fumigation is carried out.

In the SOP regarding sampling, such sampling procedures are also laid out .

Samples are taken using sterile moistened boot swabs to wipe areas like the walls, feeders, drinkers and fans. A pair of boot swabs is used per area sampled , then the floor of the house is sampled by walking with the bootswabs in a zig-zag manner to cover the surface area properly .

B. General information

1. Structure and organisation of the **Competent Authorities** (from the central CA to the local CAs)

Short description and/or reference to a document presenting this description (max. 32000 chars) :

There is only one Competent Authority being the Animal Health and Welfare Department, under the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights. There are three Directorates and the National Veterinary Laboratory under the Department

Veterinary Regulation Directorate
Animal Welfare and Promotion Services Directorate
Plant Health Directorate
National Veterinary Laboratory

The Veterinary Regulation Directorate and the National Veterinary Laboratory (NVL), are responsible for

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the supervision, coordinating, implementation and reporting of the Salmonella Control Programme. The Island of Malta is 350sqm and therefore there is only one central authority; all offices are situated in the same premises, with the exception of the Border Inspection post and of the office on the smaller Island of Gozo. The office on the Island of Gozo is only responsible of sampling all broiler farms on that Island.

1. The National Veterinary Laboratory (NVL) is ISO 17025 accredited and Salmonella isolation as per ISO method 6579 is part of the accreditation scope:

The responsibilities under the SNCP of the NVL are:

(i) The collaboration with the Animal Health Unit – Poultry Section in the supervision of the sampling and implementation of the SNCP.

(ii) The analysis of official and part of unofficial samples under the SNCP, ensuring that samples are analysed in accordance to time frame and methodology as laid down in the programme in accordance to Commission Regulations.

(iii) Collaborate and co-ordinate with the Public Health Laboratory for the typing of positive Salmonella spp. isolated at the NVL.

(iv) Issuing of laboratory reports to be sent by post/ e-mail to operators.

(v) Communicate confirmed isolation of Salmonella targeted serovars within 24 hours positive results (excluding weekends) to the OV of the Poultry Section, the official veterinarians at the white meat slaughterhouses (for broiler flocks) and the Director of the VRD, via e-mail and/or phone. Restriction of movement of positive flocks is issued with the test report.

(vi) Train VRD personnel to sample poultry flocks in accordance to the Commission Regulations responsible for sampling.

(vii) Organise training session for operators and private laboratories, as necessary, in sampling protocol of the SNCP.

(viii) Recommend and supervise private labs, authorised to carry out analysis of unofficial samples.

(ix) Collecting and maintaining SNCP analytic data.

(x) Reporting to the Commission.

(xi) Co-ordinate with the Health Promotion Department regarding epidemiological trend of Salmonellosis in humans.

2. The Animal Health Unit (within the VRD):

The Poultry Section is headed by an official veterinarian. The Section is responsible for certain provisions under the SNCP, as listed below.

(i) The registration of local poultry farms and hatcheries and issuing of operating licenses.

(ii) The registration and management of unique batch identification numbers of poultry flocks purchased by the operators.

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- (iii) The issuing of the movement document (.
- (iv) Management of related data on poultry holdings uploaded on the National Livestock Database (Intertrace).
- (v) The sampling on poultry holdings, including the SNCP.
- (vi) On-farm inspections (Bio-security and Welfare checks, census checks).
- (vii) Supervision and/or implementation of regulatory provisions required under the SNCP on poultry holdings.
- (viii) Collaborate with the National Veterinary Laboratory and the official veterinarians on white meat slaughterhouses in the implementation of the SNCP.
- (ix) The issuing of notices and letters to operators and communication of positive results to operators (through meetings or phone communication).

3. The Safety of the Food Chain Unit (within the VRD) responsible for slaughterhouses and processing plants

- (i) Responsible for the checking of food chain information at the white meat slaughterhouses.
- (ii) Sampling at the slaughterhouses, whenever necessary.
- (iii) Issuing and enforcement of any corrective actions at slaughterhouse level.
- (iv) Ensure that provisions under the SNCP are implemented by the Food Business Operator (FBO).

4. The Trade Unit implement checks on intracommunity trade and third country imports.

- (i) Control of Intratrade certification
- (ii) Co-ordination with the Animal Health Unit with regards to supervision of trade of day-olds and pullets.

2. Legal basis for the implementation of the programme

(max. 32000 chars) :

COMMISSION LEGISLATION:

Regulation (EU) 2019/268 amending Regulation (EU) No 1190/2010, (EU) No 517/2011, (EU) n0 1190/2018 as regards certain methods for Salmonella testing and sampling in poultry.

Commission Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the Control of Salmonella and other Specified Food-borne Zoonotic Agents.

Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1177/2006 of 1 August 2006 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards requirements for the use of specific control methods in the framework of the national programmes for the control of salmonella in poultry

Commission Regulation (EC) No 798/2008 of 8 August 2008 laying down a list of third countries, territories, zones or compartments from which poultry and poultry products may be imported into and transit through the community and the veterinary certification requirements

Commission Regulation (EC) No 1237/2007 of 23 October 2007 amending Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Decision 2006/696/EC as regards the placing on the market of eggs from Salmonella infected flocks of laying hens.

Commission Regulation (EU) No 517/2011 of 25 May 2011 implementing Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards a Union target for the reduction of the

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prevalence of certain *Salmonella* serotypes in laying hens of *Gallus gallus* and amending Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 200/2010;

Commission Regulation (EU) No 852/04, on the hygiene of foodstuffs;

Commission Regulation (EU) No 2073/05 of 15 November 2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs

Directive 2003/99/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 November 2003 on the monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents, amending Council Decision 90/424/EEC and repealing Council Directive 92/117/EEC

NATIONAL LEGISLATION :

Veterinary Service Act Chapter 437.

Products Safety Act L.N. 345 of 2003 on Egg Marketing Standards Regulation.

The Standard Hatchery Requirements - SL 36.41

Legal notice 441/2010 under Chapter 36 of the national legislation enforces registration of all farms having more than 20 broilers with the CA.

LN 255 of 2012 titled "Measures for the Eradication of *Salmonella* Regulations, 2012", issued under the Veterinary Services Act Chapter 437

3. Give a short summary of the outcome of the **monitoring of the target *Salmonella* serovars** (SE, ST) implemented in accordance with Article 4 of Directive 2003/99/EC (evolution of the prevalence values based on the monitoring of animal populations or subpopulations or of the food chain).

(max. 32000 chars) :

Malta has been very successful in achieving the Commission target,

In 2016, the flock prevalence was of 1.6%. However this is being calculated only on adult flocks, whereas if the pullet flocks are taken in consideration as these become laying hen flocks during the year, the prevalence would be 1.1%. All holding in the region, except one, have pullets flocks and adult flocks. Some holdings have one house, where the rearing flocks and the laying hens are together in a multi-age unit. There is only one holding, belonging to an importer that hold the imported point-of-lay, for a very short time before distributing them out to the operators. This holding was analysed twice in 2016, when the flocks were brought in from an EU Member State. If one has to exclude these two flocks mentioned, the total number of flocks in the region would be 90 and thus this gives a prevalence of the targeted serovars of 1.1% (1 flock out of 90- with a total of 23,187 birds culled)

The prevalence of the targeted serovars:

2010 - 13.22%

2011 - 9%

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2012 - 6.1%
2013 - 1.2%
2014 - 2.3% (2 positive flocks with a total of 1110 infected birds altogether)
2015 - 1.2%
2016 - 1.6%
2017 - 2.4% (2 flocks out of 83 flocks , one flock had a capacity of 200 birds)
2018- 7.37% (7 flocks out of 95)
2019 -0
2020-8.13%

4. System for the registration of holdings and identification of flocks

(max. 32000 chars) :

Malta and the smaller sister Island of Gozo are considered as one region for the surveillance and control of disease. The Competent Authority responsible for the Salmonella Control Programme at farm level, feed level, primary production and manufacturing level excluding retail, falls under the Veterinary Regulation Directorate (VRD) under the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Regulation Department within Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights –

5. System to monitor the implementation of the programme.

(max. 32000 chars) :

BO`s are trained every two years, by the CA on SNCP sampling methods in accordance to Commission Regulations. A certificate of attendance is given to all those FBO`s approved to collect own samples. The sampling sheet, as required by the CA, is submitted by the FBO with the poultry muscle for antimicrobial residue screening. As already explained, this screening antimicrobial residue test is always carried out by the National Vet Lab for all samples, even when the FBO sends the unofficial samples to a private lab. The name of the person signing the sampling form is always verified with the list of approved samplers. Internal Audits are carried out by the Chief Internal Auditor of the Division, in line with the procedure and programme based on risk assessment. This programme and risk assessment is available on line for public consultation. The last audit was in 2016. Moreover, constant monitoring of the sampling frequency is carried out by the Poultry and Lagomorphs Section within the Animal Health Unit of the Veterinary Regulation Directorate. Amongst its duties, this section is responsible for the implementation of official sampling, monitoring of the sampling frequency carried out by the FBO and receipt of the unofficial laboratory results. In the case of layer holdings, the monitoring is performed using a calendar. An officer within the section, monitors the implementation of the sampling calendar. The officer cross-checks with the National Vet Lab, when a poultry muscle has been submitted by the FBO for screening of residues. In this way, the date of sampling of unofficial samples is made known to the CA. The FBO is required to bring in a poultry muscle for screening of antimicrobial residues when unofficial samples are collected and sent to a private laboratory. This system alerts the CA that unofficial sampling has occurred and contributes to the monitoring of timely notification of unofficial results. If there are cases of repeated delays, the CA takes action in accordance to the enforcement SOP.

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C. Targets

1 Targets related to flocks official monitoring

1.1 Targets on laboratory tests on official samples for year :

2023

Type of the test (description)	Target population	Number of planned tests
Bacteriological detection test	Laying flocks of Gallus gallus	40
Serotyping	Laying flocks of Gallus gallus	15
Antimicrobial detection test	Laying flocks of Gallus gallus	20
Test for verification of the efficacy of disinfection	Laying flocks of Gallus gallus	20

1.2 Targets on official sampling of flocks for year :

2023

Type of the test (description)	Rearing flocks	Adult flocks
Total No of flocks (a)	28	64
No of flocks in the programme	28	64
No of flocks planned to be checked (b)	4	20
No of flock visits to take official samples (c)	5	20
No of official samples taken	12	57
Target serovars (d)	SE + ST	SE + ST
Possible No of flocks infected by target serovars	1	1
Possible No of flocks to be depopulated	1	1
Total No of birds to be slaughtered/culled	6 000	18 000
Total No of eggs to be destroyed	Text	100 000
Total No of eggs to be heat treated	Text	0

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- (a) Including eligible and non eligible flocks
- (b) A checked flock is a flock where at least one official sampling visit will take place. A flock shall be counted only once even if it was visited several times.
- (c) Each visit for the purpose of taking official samples shall be counted. Several visits on the same flock for taking official samples shall be counted separately.
- (d) Salmonella Enteritidis and Salmonella Typhimurium = SE + ST
Salmonella Enteritidis, Typhimurium, Hadar, Infantis, Virchow = SE+ ST + SH +SI + SV

2.1 *Targets on vaccination for year :* **2023**

Type of the test (description)	Target on vaccination
Number of flocks in the Salmonella programme	92
Number of flocks expected to be vaccinated	20
Number of birds expected to be vaccinated	35 000
Number of doses expected to be administered	95 000

Laying flocks of Gallus gallus

E. Financial information

1. Identification of the implementing entities - financial circuits/flows

Identify and describe the entities which will be in charge of implementing the eligible measures planned in this programme which costs will constitute the reimbursement/payment claim to the EU. Describe the financial flows/circuits followed.

Each of the following paragraphs (from a to e) shall be filled out if EU cofinancing is requested for the related measure.

a) Implementing entities - **sampling**: who perform the official sampling? Who pays?

(e.g. authorised private vets perform the sampling and are paid by the regional veterinary services (state budget); sampling equipment is provided by the private laboratory testing the samples which includes the price in the invoice which is paid by the local state veterinary services (state budget))

There is only one central CA and official sampling is carried out by trained support officers. The salary, cost of fuel, and consumables come from the state budget.

b) Implementing entities - **testing**: who performs the testing of the official samples? Who pays?

(e.g. regional public laboratories perform the testing of official samples and costs related to this testing are entirely paid by the state budget)

The NVL under the Veterinary Regulation Directorate (VRD) carries out the testing and has a contract with the PHL to pay for the serotyping analysis .

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c) Implementing entities - **compensation**: who performs the compensation? Who pays?
(e.g. compensation is paid by the central level of the state veterinary services,
or compensation is paid by an insurance fund fed by compulsory farmers contribution)

Compensation is paid by the VRD under the Ministry from State funds . There is a LN regulating compensation payments. This had been included as an attachment. As prescribed in paragraph 5, the rates are prescribed by a notice issues. The average market prices are provided by the National Statistics office. Time-lines are not detailed in the legislation. The farmer applies for the compensation and once the vetting of all the documents is satisfactory and the rates have been published, the compensation is passed for payment.

d) Implementing entities - **vaccination**: who provides the vaccine and who performs the vaccination? Who pays the vaccine? Who pays the vaccinator?
(e.g. farmers buy their vaccine to the private vets, send the paid invoices to the local state veterinary services which reimburse the farmers of the full amount and the vaccinator is paid by the regional state veterinary services)

The farmer pays for the vaccination bought from the veterinary pharmacy.

e) Implementing entities - **other essential measures**: who implement this measure? Who provide the equipment/service? Who pays?

Any other essential measures are always paid for by the VRD from State funds.

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2. Source of funding of eligible measures

All eligible measures for which cofinancing is requested and reimbursement will be claimed are financed by public funds.

yes

no

3. Additional measures in exceptional and justified cases

In the "*Guidelines for the Union co-funded veterinary programmes*", it is indicated that in exceptional and duly justified cases, additional necessary measures can be proposed by the Member States in their application.

If you introduced these type of measures in this programme, for each of them, please provide detailed technical justification and also justification of their cost:

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Attachments

IMPORTANT :

- 1) The more files you attach, the longer it takes to upload them .
- 2) This attachment files should have one of the format listed here : **jpg, jpeg, tiff, tif, xls, xlsx, doc, docx, ppt, pptx, bmp, pna, pdf.**
- 3) The total file size of the attached files should not exceed 2 500Kb (+- 2.5 Mb). You will receive a message while attaching when you try to load too much.
- 4) IT CAN TAKE **SEVERAL MINUTES TO UPLOAD** ALL THE ATTACHED FILES. Don't interrupt the uploading by closing the pdf and wait until you have received a Submission Number!
- 5) Only use letters from a-z and numbers from 1-10 in the attachment names, otherwise the submission of the data will not work.

List of all attachments

		Attachment name	File will be saved as (only a-z and 0-9 and - _):	File size
			Total size of attachments :	