

Ombudsman accepts Commission assurances on reindeer imports

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The European Ombudsman, **Jacob Söderman**, today welcomed the news from the European Commission that it has fulfilled the requirements of his draft recommendation on the import of reindeer meat from Russia. This follows his inquiry into alleged lack of impartiality in the procedures leading to the decisions (1) to allow the imports.

The decisions in question were taken after an on-the-spot inspection carried out in Russia by the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office. The Ombudsman found that the inspection had not been carried out properly. He called on the Commission to carry out a new on-the-spot inspection and consider reviewing the decisions in light of its results.

The Commission confirmed to the Ombudsman that a follow-up mission had been carried out during which the necessary procedures for the performance of inspection missions were respected. Based on the findings of that mission and assurances subsequently received from the Russian authorities, the Commission considered that there was no need to amend the decisions in question.

Background

The decisions in question resulted in one EU-based company gaining approval to process Russian game meat for export to the EU. The Ombudsman's inquiry revealed that the company and its Managing Director participated in the on-the-spot inspection by organising a luncheon, hotel and flight reservations, visas, temporary fax facilities, interpretation services and inspection cars.

The decision in this case can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/decision/en/000751.htm>

For further information, please call Ian Harden, Head of the Legal Department, tel: +32 (0) 2 284 38 49.

(1) Commission Decision 2000/161/EC of 14 February 2000 amending Decision 97/217/EC establishing groups of third countries which are able to use the veterinary certification for imports of wild game meat, farmed game meat and rabbit meat from third countries (OJ L 51,



24.2.2000 pp 38-40) and Commission Decision 2000/202/EC of 3 March 2000 amending Decision 97/467/EC on drawing up provisional lists of third country establishments from which the Member States authorise imports of rabbit meat and farmed game meat (OJ L 65, 14.3.2000 pp. 33-34).