



POSTER

FOODS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN PURCHASED ONLINE: A YEAR-LONG SENTINEL STUDY ON FOOD SAFETY AND LABELLING REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

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Aim. The rapid growth of e-commerce has highlighted the need to strengthen transparency and consumer protection in the online sale of foods of animal origin. Online platforms may facilitate the sale of food products by unauthorised or unregistered operators, potentially compromising food safety and traceability. This study aimed to evaluate the compliance of foods of animal origin purchased online with the legislative requirements applicable to their online sale.

Methods. Twelve online sentinel purchases were carried out over 12 months by the competent Local Health Authority based in Pescara (Italy), through different online food retailers. The monthly sampling frequency reflected the official surveillance protocol implemented by the competent authority. Products comprised fresh meat, meat preparations and meat products, classified according to Regulation (EC) n. 853/2004. Upon delivery, product temperatures were recorded, and the temperature data logger provided by the transporter was reviewed to verify that the cold chain was maintained throughout transport. Microbiological and chemical analyses were selected according to the legal requirements applicable to each product category. Compliance was assessed against the criteria established by Regulations (EC) n. 2073/2005 and n. 1333/2008, where applicable. Depending on the product category, the analytical panel included detection or enumeration of *Salmonella* spp. (EN ISO 6579-1), *Listeria monocytogenes* (EN ISO 11290-1/-2) and *Escherichia coli* (ISO 16649), together with the determination of nitrite and nitrate contents where required. In paral-

lel, a regulatory assessment verified compliance with the labelling requirements of Regulation (EU) n. 1169/2011 and the registration status of food business operators under Regulation (EC) n. 852/2004.

Results. All samples were received within the temperature limits applicable to their respective categories, indicating appropriate maintenance of the cold chain during transport. All products complied with the applicable microbiological criteria, and all chemical parameters complied with the applicable legal limits. The regulatory assessment identified two cases of non-compliance: one beef burger product lacked the mandatory food information required under Article 9 (1) of Regulation (EU) n. 1169/2011 and was marketed by an unregistered food business operator; a mortadella product failed to declare the presence of nitrites and nitrates on the label, constituting misleading food information under Article 7 (1) (a) of Regulation (EU) n. 1169/2011.

Conclusions. Within the scope of this sentinel surveillance study, all products complied with the applicable microbiological and chemical food safety criteria, and cold chain integrity was maintained throughout transport. However, two of the twelve products (16.7%) presented regulatory non-compliances related to labelling and operator registration. These findings highlight gaps in the oversight of e-commerce food sales and underline the importance of continued official surveillance of e-commerce platforms to ensure compliance with EU food legislation, improve transparency and protect consumers.