

Authorisation to use certain proteins of animal origin to feed non-ruminant farmed animals

What has been adopted on 17 August 2021?

Following a positive vote from the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (Biological Safety of the Food Chain section), on 9 April 2021, and the approval of European Parliament and the Council, the Commission has adopted the Regulation amending Annex IV to Regulation (EC) No 999/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the prohibition to feed non-ruminant farmed animals, other than fur animals, with protein derived from animals.

What have Member States, supported by Co-legislators, approved?

The Regulation adopted on 17 August authorises the following uses:

- processed animal protein derived from pigs and insects in poultry feed;
- processed animal protein derived from poultry and insect in pig feed;
- gelatine and collagen of ruminant origin in the feed of non-ruminant farmed animals.

Strict conditions are built in the Regulation to prevent cross-contamination, ensure compliance with the prohibition of intra-species recycling (i.e. cannibalism), and facilitate official control of the feed.

What are processed animal protein?

Processed animal protein is animal protein derived exclusively from low risk material from healthy animals declared fit for human consumption following an inspection before slaughter. This may include any part of these healthy animals which is not used to produce food for human consumption.

Protein derived from high-risk material, such as cadavers and specified risk material, are strictly excluded from use in processed animal protein.

Why can processed animal protein derived from pigs and poultry be authorised now?

The issues which justified the extension of the feed ban to non-ruminants (e.g. pigs and poultry), back in 2001, have now been resolved:

- Bovine spongiform encephalopathy is fully under control. The last case of classical bovine spongiform encephalopathy, in the tail of the epidemic, was found in 2016.
- Following restructuring of the feed industry, the correct and proper separation of species can now be ensured.
- Appropriate laboratory test methods have been developed. They are specific and sensitive, including with the now well-known PCR method.

Is the Commission initiative based on sound science?

Yes. The new measures are all based on several scientific opinions delivered by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), including on the processed animal protein derived from pigs and poultry. These opinions all concluded that the risk for the food chain will remain negligible. Thus, in the absence of a scientific basis, there was no longer any health justification for maintaining the prohibitions that are now being lifted.

Moreover, strict conditions are built in the Regulation to ensure that the feed is safe. They aim at preventing cross-contaminations by a strict dedication of production lines by species, at ensuring a full prohibition of intra-species recycling (the so-called cannibalism), and at empowering the competent authorities with appropriate control tools including very sensitive and specific test methods.

Does a feed ban remain in the EU?

Yes, some of the most severe feed ban provisions in the world remain in force in the European Union, way above the international standard. The feeding of any farmed animal with protein derived from ruminant animals (cattle, sheep and goats) remains completely prohibited, with the exception of milk and now of collagen and gelatine. Simultaneously, the feeding of ruminants with any animal-derived protein remains also completely prohibited, with a few limited exceptions, such as milk of course. Furthermore, the prohibition of intra-species recycling (the so-called cannibalism) is strictly enforced in the Union. This is why the use of processed animal protein derived from pigs has not been allowed in pig feed, and the use of processed animal protein derived from poultry has not been allowed in poultry feed.

Why did the Commission propose this Regulation?

The Commission proposal was triggered by new scientific knowledge demonstrating that a few specific feed ban measures implemented since 2001 were no longer justified, and by the necessity to improve the valorisation in the feed chain of protein derived from animals, in the broader context of the Farm-to-Fork strategy, which aims at promoting a more sustainable agriculture.

The new measures will thus allow a broader use in the feed of high quality protein derived from pigs, poultry and insects, which are locally produced in the Union, partially substituting soybean imported from the Americas. This protein source will be particularly beneficial to address the nutritional needs of some specific categories of pigs and poultry. In addition, the relaxation of the use of processed animal protein derived from pigs and poultry will contribute to a more level playing field for European farmers.

How will these measures contribute to a more sustainable agriculture and to circular economy?

40% of the EU processed animal protein derived from pigs and poultry was exported so far to non EU-countries to be fed there to pets and farmed animals. Authorising their use in poultry and pig feed respectively will allow for a local valorisation instead of export and reduce the amount of soy imported from the Americas, thus contributing to reducing the EU protein gap and the carbon footprint of the feed sector.

Insects are particularly efficient at converting biomass into high-value protein. They have the potential to play an important role for a more sustainable feed sector. The opening of the pig and poultry feed markets should stimulate the demand for

processed animal protein derived from insects, allowing a new and significant development of this emerging and promising sector.

The authorisation of the use of ruminant-derived collagen and gelatine is a clear contribution to a more circular economy in the food and feed sectors. It makes it possible to valorise in the feed an estimated 100.00 tonnes of former foodstuffs, which, because of the possible presence of such collagen and gelatine, had so far to be excluded from the feed chain and sent to biogas production.