Guidance on Minimum Sampling Frequencies for Butcher Shops Producing Minced Meat, Meat Preparations and Fresh Poultry Meat in Small Quantities

This document provides guidance to enforcement officers on minimum sampling frequencies for butcher shops producing minced meat, meat preparations and fresh poultry meat in small quantities[1].

Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2073/2005, as amended specifies sampling frequencies for carcasses, minced meat, meat preparations and mechanically separated meat and fresh poultry meat in Chapter 3.2 of Annex I. These sampling frequencies must be adhered to by food business operators (FBOs) as a minimum. However, there is a derogation for small slaughterhouses and establishments producing minced meat, meat preparations and fresh poultry meat in small quantities. These businesses are exempt from the sampling frequencies specified in the Regulation when justified on the basis of a risk assessment[2] and consequently authorised by the competent authority.

This document does not cover any butcher shop producing minced meat and/or meat preparations intended to be eaten raw (food category 1.4). In this case, the butcher shop must test in accordance with each applicable criterion as per the sampling frequency set in Chapter 3.2 of the Regulation. In addition, the butcher shop should test any minced meat or meat preparations intended to be eaten raw as a ready-to-eat food for other microbiological hazards not covered under the Regulation but considered relevant under the FBOs food safety management system such as Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC) (also known as Verocytogenic E. coli [VTEC]). The microbiological limits in FSAI Guidance Note 3 can be used to assess the results of any testing carried out for minced meat or meat preparations intended to be eaten raw that is additional to the requirement for food category 1.4 under the Regulation.

[1] FSAI Guidance Note 35 provides guidance on establishing appropriate microbiological sampling frequencies in low throughput slaughterhouses and meat processing plants. Available at: https://www.fsai.ie.
[2] As part of the 852 visit record during planned/planned surveillance inspection.

Written notice to FBO detailing any derogation from sampling frequencies

Butcher shops total supply of minced meat and/or meat preparations and/or fresh poultry meat produced is ≤600Kg/week (with no wholesaling activity)		
Criteria for assessment by Environmental Health Officer	**Tick one of the following as appropriate[3]**	**Minimum sampling required**
Confidence in the design and the implementation of the Food Safety Management System (FSMS) in butcher shop	☐	An approach involving no sampling may be applied
Lack of confidence in the design and the implementation of FSMS in butcher shop	☐	Batch sample (n=5) (taken representatively from the same batch) every four months for each applicable criterion
Butcher shops total supply of minced meat and/ or meat preparations and/or fresh poultry meat produced is ≤600Kg/week and wholesaling ≤250Kg per week of minced meat		
Criteria for assessment by Environmental Health Officer	**Tick one of the following as appropriate[3]**	**Minimum sampling required**
Confidence in the design and the implementation of FSMS in butcher shop	☐	An approach involving no sampling may be applied
Lack of confidence in the design and the implementation of FSMS in butcher shop	☐	Batch sample (n=5) (taken representatively from the same batch) every two months for each applicable criterion

Signed: _____ Date of Assessment: _____

Environmental Health Officer

[3] The completion of this section provides documented evidence of the decision made by the EHO in relation to the derogation from sampling frequencies. This decision should be communicated to the FBO. A copy of this document should be kept on the food premises file. The sampling frequencies shown above may be increased at the discretion of the EHO when justified on the basis of a risk assessment during inspection of the premises. This document should be signed and dated as a record of any revised decision or amendment to sampling frequencies.