



Opinion 02-2023 of the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC on the impact of Private Assurance Schemes (PAS) on inspection results in the transformation sector and in slaughterhouses

Terms of reference

The Scientific Committee is asked to examine whether the presence of a 'Private Assurance Scheme', or 'private auditing standard', can have an effect on the food safety guarantee that operators from the food chain must give. It is requested that this effect be measured on the basis of equivalence in the results of FASFC inspections of operators and operations in the food chain rather than on the basis of equivalence of content and guidelines of the PAS studied. For this purpose, the inspection results between 'PAS certified' companies (which have a PAS for one or all of their activities) and 'non PAS certified' companies must be compared. More specifically, these comparisons will concern the inspection results (favourable/favourable with comments/unfavourable) and some of the measures (infringement notice, warning) that the FASFC can deliver following an inspection, depending on

- the concomitant validation or not of a self-checking system by the operator;
- the Place-Activity-Product code (LAP) in the FASFC databank;
- the (sub)sector;
- the scopes of the inspection checklists used during the inspection.

Method

This opinion is based on expert opinions and comparisons of the results and measures applied (infringement notices, warnings) following inspections carried out by the FASFC in the framework of its control programme in operators from the food chain with or without a PAS, taking into account the presence of a validated Self-Control System (SCS) or not.

Due to data availability constraints, the requested study covers only two types of PAS (IFS Food and FSSC 22000) in the processing sector and the slaughterhouse sub-sector in the primary production sector.

All inspection results available in the FASFC database for operators in the processing sector and slaughterhouses were used for the comparisons. These inspection results were recorded over a period of 3 years. As all available data were taken into account (it was not a sample), a statistical analysis was not necessary..

Conclusion

On the basis of the comparisons made, the opinion of the Scientific Committee is that there is an overall positive effect of the presence of a PAS in the absence of a validated SCS in the processing sector. In other words, the effect of a PAS is lower if the operator already has a validated SCS. On the other hand, this positive effect on the results of FASFC inspections was not found for slaughterhouses. This underlines the importance of FASFC inspections in this sub-sector.

Recommendations

The Scientific Committee recommends that these analyses be automated so that they can be repeated with updated data at a certain frequency (e.g. annually). Similar analyses could also be carried out for other sectors and PAS.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french.