

EFTA Surveillance Authority
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BELGIUM

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Potential derogation from Council directive 97/78 EEC

Due to lack of rain for most of the summer in the larger part of Southern Norway, Norwegian farmers are facing an unforeseen and extensive draught. Therefore, pastures are scarce and the production of grass feed is dramatically reduced - in some areas to as low as 30 percent of normal production. Other parts of Europe seem to face a similar situation. Normally, farmers have been able to buy sufficient amounts of hay in Sweden or Finland, but this, most likely, will not be possible this year.

Norwegian farmers are therefore in a situation where they may need to import hay and maybe straw from third countries (primarily Iceland). The volumes will be large and the end destinations will be located over the larger part of Southern Norway. For instance, potential imports from Iceland will be destined to the western and southern coast of Norway.

Council directive 97/78 EC regulates the organisation of veterinary checks on products entering the Community from third Countries. Article 19 of the directive states that the Commission shall draw up a list of plant products which, in particular on account of their subsequent destination, may give rise to the risk of spreading infectious or contagious animal disease and on that account are to be subjected to the veterinary checks laid down by the said Directive. Article 3 of the Directive states that products that are to be subject to veterinary checks, shall be introduced to the territory via a border inspection post (BIP). Commission Decision 2007/275 EC, list straw and hay as products covered by Council Directive 97/78 EC.

Norway has only two approved BIPs for these kind of products, both of which are located on the coast of the Oslo fjord, Oslo harbour and Borg harbour. Due to the volumes needed and

the cost of long transports, it would be a necessity to be able to perform the official control of these products on several points of entry into Norway.

We hereby inform ESA that due to the extraordinary situation caused by the draught, Norway intends temporarily to derogate from requirements in Council Directive 97/78 EC with regard to the requirement that hay and straw shall be introduced to the territory via an approved BIP. We foresee that we will establish two or three additional points of entry (harbours) for the import of hay and straw. Official control at the points of entry will be performed by veterinarians from the local departments of the Norwegian Food Safety Authority. These local veterinarians will receive the necessary support from the Official Veterinarian in the BIPs of Oslo and Borg harbour. The support includes the use of Traces.

Yours sincerely

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Director General

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