

Guidance on Mechanically Separated Meat (MSM): Introduction

This guidance will explain how the definition of Mechanically Separated Meat (MSM) in Annex I, point 1.14 of assimilated Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 and Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 in Northern Ireland should be applied.

Introduction

[Assimilated Regulation \(EC\) No 853/2004](#) in GB / [Regulation \(EC\) No 853/2004](#) in Northern Ireland (NI) (together ‘the Regulations’) lay down specific hygiene rules for Food Business Operators (FBOs) in relation to food of animal origin. The specific hygiene requirements that must be applied to the preparation and handling of products of animal origin depend on the nature of the product as defined under the Regulations. Establishments manufacturing and/or handling products subject to requirements under Annex III to the Regulations must be approved for the manufacture and/or handling of products that they wish to place on the market.

Any product must be correctly classified to ensure that its preparation and handling meet the requirements of food law for that product. Product classifications are set out in the definitions provided in Annex I to the Regulations.

The Courts have delivered judgments (together ‘the Judgments’) that clarify how the definition of MSM in Annex I to the Regulations should be interpreted and applied. There have been no changes to the Regulations as a result of the Judgments; no legislative requirements regarding MSM have been added, amended or removed.

This guidance provides advice and clarification on implications of the Judgments. It supersedes the 2012 ‘Guidance on the Moratorium on the production and use of desinewed meat from ruminant bones in the United Kingdom’, which was officially withdrawn on 14 November 2022.

It is prohibited to use bones or bone-in cuts of bovine, ovine and caprine animals for the production of MSM, under Annex V of [assimilated Regulation \(EC\) No 999/2001](#) in GB / [Regulation \(EC\) No 999/2001](#) in NI, laying down rules for the prevention, control and eradication of certain transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs).

Intended audience

This guidance is intended for:

- FBOs currently using, or intending to use, mechanical meat separation equipment in their production processes to separate residual meat from bones
- FBOs using, or intending to use, MSM as an ingredient
- FBOs producing or using, or intending to produce or use, an ingredient for which clarity is required as to its classification i.e., whether it is MSM
- FBOs that place MSM products on England, Wales and NI markets and exporters

While this guidance is primarily intended to support FBOs achieve compliance with the regulatory requirements, it may be used by local authorities, FSA operational and DAERA staff to support official controls and provide consistency of the regulatory approach.

Purpose of the guidance

The Court Judgments clarified how the definition of MSM in Annex I to the Regulations is to be interpreted and applied. This guidance supports FBOs in determining whether a product is MSM to ensure their compliance in line with regulatory requirements.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with Annex A: MSM Q&A, which provides further general information on MSM and assistance in understanding implications for FBOs.

Legal status of the guidance

Assimilated EU Law is identified in this guidance using the following format: assimilated Regulation (EC) No xxx/xxxx. In NI, EU law continues to apply for most food law and feed hygiene and safety law and is identified in this guidance using the following format: Regulation (EC) No xxx/xxxx.

Other requirements that are outside the scope of this guidance but also provide legal requirements relevant to the production of MSM are detailed below. It is the responsibility of FBOs to ensure compliance with them.

- legal requirements of the Regulations in so far as they concern the production, handling and labelling of MSM in Section V of Annex III of the Regulations
- TSE measures concerning MSM under Article 9 and Annex V (paragraph 5) of [assimilated Regulation \(EC\) No 999/2001 in GB](#) and [Regulation \(EC\) No 999/2001 in NI](#)
- the microbiological criteria for foodstuffs in [assimilated Regulation \(EC\) No 2073/2005 in GB](#) and [Regulation \(EC\) No 2073/2005 in NI](#), in so far as they concern the production of MSM

It is the responsibility of the FBO to comply with food law. This guidance document cannot cover every scenario, and you may need to consider the relevant legislation to understand how it applies in your circumstances. FBOs may wish to seek advice from their competent authority; an FSA-appointed Official Veterinarian (OV) for FSA-approved establishments; or their [local food safety team](#) for local authority approved/registered establishments.

Review

We undertake regular reviews to ensure guidance remains relevant. The next scheduled review date for this guidance is 03 January 2027.

Feedback

We welcome feedback on this guidance, including reports of broken links or out of date content, and will consider all feedback in the next review. Please provide any feedback to meathygiene@food.gov.uk.