

Desk study to review current evidence and outline work streams to support the development of a policy for smoked skin on sheep meat

Area of research interest: [Chemical hazards in food and feed](#)

Study duration: 2015-07-01

Planned completion: 1 November 2015

Project code: FS102128

Conducted by: University of Liverpool

Background

Smoked, skin-on sheep meat is produced from sheep whose wool has been burnt off as part of the dressing process. There is a demand in the UK for sheep meat with the 'skin-on', traditionally from consumers of West African origin whose native culture embraces singed and smoked carcasses of a range of mammalian species.

However, current EU legislation prohibits the production of ruminant carcasses with the skin left on and skinning during the dressing procedure is a statutory requirement ([Regulation 853/2004](#)). Our organisation has commissioned several scientific studies to explore the potential for the safe production of smoked, skin-on sheep meat. In recent opinions on the scientific validity of these studies, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that more evidence needs to be gathered in order to develop a process for the production of skin-on sheep carcasses that are suitable for human consumption.

Research Approach

This study aims to review current evidence and outline work-streams to support the development of a policy for smoked, skin-on sheep meat. The approach included:

1. A systematic review on the safety of smoked, skin-on meat from sheep, compared to conventionally produced skin-off carcasses; and
2. A critical review on the smoked, skin-on sheep meat production. This part included the identification of relevant public health hazards associated with this production and also possible effects that this process could have on these hazards. Also, other relevant aspects for delivering a safe and hygienic process for the production of smoked, skin-on sheep meat were identified and considered such as official controls and animal welfare implications. Furthermore, the results of this report have highlighted areas of research that need to be addressed before making a case to legalise the production of smoked, skin-on sheep meat in the UK and EU.

3. A survey of slaughterhouse operators' attitudes towards the legalisation of skin-on sheep meat production, but also through the information obtained from consumers of this product from Nigeria.
4. The update of Hybu Cig Cymru's "Appraisal of the Opportunities in the Skin on Sheep Meat Market for Wales", based on the findings of the critical review.

Results

On the basis of the work undertaken during this study, the options for delivering a safe and hygienic production of smoked, skin-on sheep meat have been identified and the report makes a number of recommendations on biological hazards, chemical hazards and official controls that merit further research.

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

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