

TRACEABILITY OF POULTRY EGGS AND POULTRY MEAT: TOOLS AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH A NATIONAL CERTIFICATION SCHEME

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Traceability in the poultry meat and egg sector has existed in many countries for over half a century. Originally established with the aim of quality assurance for the consumer, and producer management, traceability systems are compulsory step for food safety and the prevention of zoonotic diseases.

In poultry production, traceability covers the entire production chain from the hatchery through the farm, slaughter house, packaging and processing to the point of sale of the finished product.

A wide variety of tools exists to achieve the objectives of traceability and the choice of tools depends on the size of the unit involved (family, rural or industrial) and the type of production system, intensive or outdoor.

The methods used can be more, or less, sophisticated and include paper records or labels, bar codes, and more innovative tools such as electronic databases, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips or Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). Within the poultry industry the traceable unit is the flock whereas at the packaging plant traceability of the saleable unit is feasibility.

For an effective use of traceability, it is important to harmonise national systems with international standards established by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission. In France, following the introduction of European regulations (178-2002), guidelines were drawn up to help farmers implement these compulsory measures. This approach seems to be a good way to implement traceability in the production chain. Moreover, the existence of a national certification scheme is an advantage for the establishment of traceability systems, which used an independent third party organization to provide control.

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