



COMMISSION EUROPÉENNE

Secrétariat général

INFO(2012)25

Bruxelles, le 28 mars 2012

VISIT TO CHINA
(BEIJING, 18 – 21 MARCH 2012)

Note d'information de M.DALLI

Destinataires : Membres de la Commission
Directeurs généraux et chefs de service.

INFORMATION NOTE OF COMMISSIONER DALLI TO THE COLLEGE

VISIT TO CHINA (BEIJING, 18 – 21 MARCH 2012)

My visit to China took place from 18 to 21 March. Its objective was to review our cooperation activities and address respective concerns in the areas of food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, consumer product safety and public health in the context of following dialogues:

- The High Level meeting of the Memorandum of Understanding between DG SANCO and the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) on consumer product safety and food safety and SPS;
- The High Level meeting of the Memorandum of Understanding between DG SANCO and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) on Animal Health;
- The High Level meeting of the Terms of Reference between DG SANCO and the Ministry of Health on Public Health and Food Safety;
- The EU-China Consultation and Cooperation Mechanism between DG SANCO and China's State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) on cosmetics, medical devices and pharmaceutical products.

During my visit I met with the Minister of AQSIQ, Mr Zhi Shuping, the Vice-Minister of MoA in charge for animal health, Mr GAO Hongbin, the Commissioner of the SFDA, Mr Yin Li, and the Minister of Health, Mr Chen Zhu.

In addition, we launched a joint EU-China cooperation project on anti-microbial resistance at the Peking University First Hospital. I also met representatives from the European Chamber of Commerce dealing with pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and medical devices and visited a pharmaceutical and a battery factory to learn about standards and inspection processes carried out on products prior to export to the EU.

Meeting with AQSIQ Minister Zhi Shuping

We reviewed the intensive technical cooperation achieved over the last months in the area of food safety, sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) and consumer products (including cosmetics) between our two services, in particular those under the EU-China Trade Programme and the Better Training for Safer Food Programme.

We agreed that both sides would further strengthen this cooperation. There are many areas where achievements are feasible and this cooperation needs to be implemented in a way that generates mutual benefits. This commitment is taken while ensuring that consumers enjoy the highest level of safety and quality to promote durable and sustainable trade between the EU and China.

I highlighted the need to pursue the goal of facilitating harmonized market access for EU food products into China, which are still hindered by cumbersome SPS procedures, taking into consideration the functioning of the EU single internal market.

In this regard, China has accepted to discuss about the possible consideration of the EU as a single entity and we gave mandate to our technical teams to identify in the area of SPS, the

products to be used for a feasibility study on the functioning of the EU internal market and to identify potential simplification of market access procedures

Minister Zhi reassured that, for products already authorized from some EU Member States, the already existing conditions of import into China could be streamlined for the same type of products (not yet authorised) from other EU Member States bearing the same sanitary status.

I reiterated the EU request, in line with international standards, to lift the ban on import of EU beef and bovine products to China due to BSE. Minister Zhi replied that BSE was a very sensitive and complicated issue in China and, that at present, some scientific questions on BSE were still not totally fully resolved.

Minister Zhi reiterated his request to extend the authorization to additional provinces for cooked poultry meat for export to the EU. I highlighted that the rules to access the EU market mirror the very stringent requirements that apply to Member States for the internal market, and given the endemic presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza in China, there was a need to ensure that this disease was fully controlled. I reassured that the EU was ready to reconsider the situation for Henan and Fujian provinces as soon as the relevant import conditions would be fully met.

Minister Zhi requested the EU to decrease the sampling ratio of Chinese containing dairy products for melamine. I highlighted that there was no import ban in place and that the measures in place, concerning testing at imports, had already been significantly alleviated (testing reduced from 100 % to 20 % in 2009). I also added that his request would be reconsidered after the receipt of guarantees from China that old contaminated stocks have been totally destroyed.

On consumer goods safety, we agreed to launch the first ever joint market surveillance exercise in this field for goods imported into the EU, representing more than 50% of all products imported from China. This cooperation starts with a project focussed on toys imported to Rotterdam, but will then be extended to other products and locations.

We jointly noted with great satisfaction that the cooperation between our notification databases led to visible progress. Through efforts from both sides, 965 alerts were registered in 2011, representing an absolute decrease by 25.7% compared with 1298 in 2010. We agreed that this trend would need to be confirmed and we undertook to further intensify the use of the information notification platform.

We agreed to meet again in Europe in the spring of 2013 to review the progress achieved.

Meeting with MoA Vice-Minister GAO Hongbin

Together with Vice-Minister GAO, we discussed animal health and welfare, with a particular focus on the Schmallerberg outbreak in the EU and the avian influenza situation in China.

We also agreed to increase cooperation in the area of surveillance and control of key animal diseases. More specifically, a new Annex updating our Memorandum of Understanding, on cooperation for animal health reference laboratories was finalized.

Meeting with the Commissioner of the China's State Food and Drug Administration (SFDA) Mr Yin Li

I have encountered Commissioner Yin Li, following a technical meeting at DG level where substantial progress was achieved on safety evaluation and market access of cosmetics (registration, authorisation of new ingredients), and medical devices (re-registration). With

regard to pharmaceuticals I insisted in particular on the new EU requirements to reduce risks of falsified medicines (to enter in force on 1 July 2013) imposing every consignment to be accompanied by an attestation that EU GMP rules have been respected.

Meeting with Minister of Health Chen Zhu

During this meeting, we exchanged our respective points of view and shared experience on the on-going cooperation activities, including the just launched cooperation on antimicrobial resistance. We then had an exchange of views on our respective policies on tobacco control, non communicable diseases and food safety standards. We also agreed to expand our cooperation in international standard setting organisations building on the good example of Codex Alimentarius, where our alliance prevented the adoption of the maximum residue levels for ractopamine, a chemical product used to artificially accelerate the growth of animals. At the request of Mr Chen Zhu, I clarified our approach in the EU regarding the marketing of traditional Chinese medicine products, underlining the fact that the objective was to offer the largest range of products, while ensuring the quality and safety of the products.

Conclusion

Taking into account the political situation in China, where a change of leadership will take place at the end of the year, followed by new ministers, my visit was both timely and appropriate to recall our main concerns and to expand our cooperation with the Chinese authorities.

Overall the results obtained exceeded the most optimistic expectations.
