

COV Meat Sector Code of Conduct

A guide for appropriate behaviour and correction actions in the area of food safety and product integrity within the meat sector

COV Meat Sector Code of Conduct

The COV and its members attach a great deal of importance to confidence in their actions. This is why the COV has drafted a sector-specific Code of Conduct (hereinafter referred to as 'the COV Code'). This code can be seen as a specialisation of the Food Chain Code of Conduct, which also includes animal welfare.

The COV Code is a guide for appropriate behaviour and correct actions in the area of food safety and product integrity of animal products. This COV Code has been drawn up to help prevent damage to the image of the Dutch meat chain, from the beginning, the seed or the (genetic) starting material, including the animal feed, right through to the sale of a product to the consumer, as a result of (socially) unacceptable behaviour.

Scope and reach

The COV Code wants to be a guide for all meat producers or companies trading in meat or raw materials for products with meat; meat companies and entrepreneurs throughout the entire chain with animal protein products, from primary production through to retail, can subscribe to the COV Code.

Parties who sign this COV Code will be committing themselves to the conduct described in this COV Code in relation to all actions undertaken by their companies and employees. The COV Code must be signed by the person with ultimate responsibility for the company.

Companies signing up to this code will be expected to make both internal and external announcements, for example via their website, about the fact they are complying with this code of conduct.

Meat companies can also work in accordance with their company's own Code, providing this own specific code of conduct is at least equivalent to the COV Code rules.

Starting point

The COV Code's starting point is that those who have signed it conform to all legal obligations set out in the European and national legislation where the guaranteeing of food safety and food integrity are concerned.

Code of Conduct

The following rules of conduct for guaranteeing food safety and integrity will be followed by the company and its employees:

1. Legislation

The company and all its employees comply with all applicable legislation, rules and regulations in relation to guaranteeing food safety and food integrity in all their activities.

2. Employees

The company informs all relevant employees of the fact the COV Code has been signed and that all employees need to comply with this code. The company will train all relevant employees in order to ensure these employees are familiar with the most recent and applicable (legal) regulations and rules which are applicable to their activities in relation to guaranteeing food safety and food integrity. The company will regularly assess whether the relevant employees have a satisfactory level of knowledge.

3. Products/services

The company will make every effort to ensure the produced or traded products are safe for their intended use.

The company will make every effort to ensure any risks in relation to food fraud in the chain links before or after the company have been identified, for example via the implementation of so-called VACCP (vulnerability assessment critical control points). The company will also ensure the companies immediately before or after its own link in the chain will make a similar effort in connection with their immediately preceding or connecting links. The company can introduce appropriate measures to avoid food fraud, if so required.

The company communicates truthfully and in line with the applicable laws and legislation in all statements regarding its products, as well as applicable (advertising) codes where advertising is concerned.

4 Interested parties/stakeholders

Companies work in accordance with internationally recognised principles of “good corporate governance”.

Companies will report¹ on their activities in relation to guaranteeing food safety and product integrity at least once a year.

5. Business integrity

Companies or their employees will never directly or indirectly offer bribes, in whatever form, nor will they ever accept these. Any form of (attempted) bribery will be reported to a confidential person by employees as part of an internal whistleblowing regulation, or anonymously by reporting a crime to the House for Whistleblowers.

¹ An example of a report can be an audit report prepared by a certifying body, which has audited the guaranteeing of the food safety and product integrity.

6. Malpractices

Companies will make sure a transparent and confidential procedure is in place, which will allow all employees to report objections and suspicions about any actions within the company which are damaging, or can damage, the guaranteeing of food safety and integrity (please also refer to paragraph 5. Business integrity).

7. Animal welfare

Companies will ensure animals are treated with respect and that animal welfare rules are complied with. Employees who have identified any malpractices must immediately report this to the animal welfare officer or a confidential person.

Monitoring the compliance with animal welfare is guaranteed, for example, through the use of cameras, which are regularly monitored and which result in both preventative and corrective actions.

8. Company-specific code of conduct

Companies are also free to draw up their own company-specific code, providing this minimally includes the following rules:

- A) The company complies with all legal regulations and legislation in relation to food safety and product integrity.
- B) The company ensures all relevant knowledge is and remains up to date.
- C) The company makes every effort to ensure its products are safe for their intended use.
- D) The company ensures any information regarding the products provided is correct (prevent fraud, also with your suppliers).
- E) The company provides a report at least once a year regarding the state of guaranteeing food safety and preventing food fraud.
- F) The company ensures a whistleblowing scheme is in place for reporting malpractices in relation to the guaranteeing of food safety and food fraud and will ensure any such reports can be made confidentially.
- G) The company will introduce measures to prevent bribery.
- H) The company will ensure animal welfare is guaranteed within the company and that a regulation is in place for employees to report any animal welfare malpractices and the use of cameras is guaranteed.

9. Compliance/signature

By signing this code of conduct, the undersigned confirms to comply with the rules described in this COV Code.

Date: 8th February 2018

Company name:

Name:

Signature: