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## **Romania**

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### **Foreign Bovine Genetics Access to the Romanian Market Threaten**

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Situation

Dairy and Products

Livestock and Products

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**Report Highlights:**

The Ministry of Agriculture recently cut the direct link between animal genetic suppliers and commercial bovine farms by requiring all marketing of genetics be conducted through local animal husbandry associations. Although the order does not distinguish between the foreign and domestic genetics providers, the order is expected to favor the local domestic semen producers as they offer their products at lower-prices.

### **General Information:**

In May 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture approved Order 340/2013 concerning the procedures for authorizing the economic operators which conduct activities and services in artificial insemination. Apart from setting up minimum criteria that the animal genetics (frozen semen) have to meet in order to be placed on the market, the order also prohibits “direct” contracting between the genetics suppliers and their customers (bovine commercial farmers), since only “county-level” animal husbandry associations are authorized to market the frozen semen to commercial farms. Prior to the approval of this order, US semen exporters were able to sell animal genetic material through their in-country representative directly to the bovine farms.

### **Authorization of storage centers**

Storage centers for frozen semen must be authorized, assuming they fulfill a series of conditions, such as equipment, tools and materials needed for the whole technologic cycle of storage, control and distribution of frozen semen (containers for storage and transport, different capacities goblets, pliers, microscope, slides, phials etc.). The authorized storage center can also accommodate storage of embryos, assuming they fulfill the requirements of Directive 89/556/CEE concerning the animal health conditions to be fulfilled by the embryos imported from third countries and there is a separated space available for storage.

### **Requirements to be met by the frozen semen**

In terms of specific conditions the frozen semen must meet, the order mentions that the semen should originate from cattle herds free of the diseases laid down in the Directive 64/432/CEE on health problems affecting trade in bovine animals and swine and which have been prior to their quarantine timeframe subject to the tests provided by the Directive 64/432/CEE. Apart from these requirements, the semen must come from cattle herds free of Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR) /Infectious Pustular Vulvovaginitis (IPV) or to have tested negative for these diseases following a serologic exam. The imported semen must be accompanied by the sanitary-veterinary certificate issued by the competent authority of the country of origin.

The frozen semen doses have to be visibly marked/stamped with the date of collection, name of breed and the name of the donor, and the authorization number of the collection center. All entrances and exits in the storage center must be recorded per the model provided by the above regulation.

### **Minimum requirements and indexes for the bovine frozen semen**

The storage and marketing centers have to ensure the frozen semen meets the following minimum conditions and indexes:

- Identification elements for the doses: the producer, code, bull's name and breed, collection and freezing dates, center's authorization number
- Dose volume: straw 0.25 ml
- Spermatozoids mobility after thawing: 0.30
- Total Spermatozoids concentration/dose: 25,000,000
- Mobile Spermatozoids concentration/ dose: 7,500,000
- Live Spermatozoids greater than 30 percent
- Abnormal Spermatozoids maximum 18 percent for dairy breeds and cross-breeds
- Abnormal Spermatozoids maximum 25 percent for beef breeds
- Immature Spermatozoids maximum 2 percent

### **Marketing requirements for frozen semen**

The frozen semen will be distributed in straws to customers (animal husbandry association authorized at county-level, farmer (animal husbandry), authorized as physical person, including city-halls) only in goblets with a corresponding capacity for the number of ordered doses.

The frozen semen ordered will be accompanied by the quality analysis bulletin, the health certificate and the pedigree showing the bull's amelioration value. Frozen semen will be marketed only at the order of authorized animal husbandry associations at county level, posted on the ANARZ website, and/or farmers (animal husbandry) of bovines, registered as authorized physical persons, including city-halls, based on the approval issued by the county office of the animal improvement.

All storage and distribution centers must keep detailed records regarding all bull semen movements per bull, whose status will be monthly submitted to the competent authority at national level (ANARZ).

### **Genetics import on a rising trend**

Total bovine semen imports increased over time, with few exceptions. In 2012, imports almost doubled in terms of volume compared to a year before, from 150,000 doses in 2011 to 394,147 doses in 2012. For 2012 total trade value exceeded 715,000 USD.

United States ranks fifth among foreign suppliers on the Romanian market in terms of value, with about 7,500 doses exported in 2012 (USD 74,000). The market is characterized by fierce competition. Apart from the domestic semen producers, there are other foreign suppliers, such as Canada, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. Farmers who attended training programs and explored the structure of dairy farms in United States appreciate the value of investing in US high-quality genetics. US high-quality genetics supplied to Romanian farms have often shown well during livestock exhibitions and contests, where offspring of US origin bulls receive the highest or among the highest awards.

### **Potential effects on the genetics market**

According to the regulation, frozen semen distribution is based on the contract between the supplier and

the customer (authorized animal husbandry associations at county level and/or farmers (animal husbandry) of bovines, registered as authorized physical persons, including city-halls). This provision implies that the commercial farms must be members of a county-level association in order to purchase frozen semen, while non-commercial farms (backyard farm) may continue to purchase semen directly, which might not be the right direction for improving the sector.

At this moment it is unclear how the commercial farms, the main customers of the US animal genetics companies (importers), will be able to have access to the highest-quality genetics supply necessary for improving their animal performances. Although the order does not distinguish between the foreign and domestic genetics providers (US exporters represented in Romania and the local semen producers), the order is expected to produce positive effects at the domestic semen producers' level as they have lower-priced semen, which farmers will be tempted to purchase through the animal husbandry associations regardless the quality. Unless the order is amended, the new provisions are going to slow down the speed at which the Romanian bovine sector will increase its efficiency. Cow productivity improved over the past few years either through import of live young cattle or frozen semen, but Romania is still lagging behind many EU Members States in terms of its genetic base.