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Regulations governing the ‘National Quality System for Animal Welfare – SQNBA’ pursuant to Article 224-bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020, and operational procedures for the management and approval of certification requirements (specifications) for free-range fattening pigs and cattle.

HAVING REGARD TO Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021, which lays down rules on support for the strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP strategic plans), and which is financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD); and which repeals Regulations (EU) No. 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council. The latter provide, inter alia, in Article 6 – Specific Objective (i), that the EU agricultural sector should respond to societal needs in terms of food and health. This includes producing high-quality, healthy and nutritious food in a sustainable way, and reducing food waste. and improve animal welfare and tackle antimicrobial resistance’;

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on ‘The Future of Food and Farming’ (Doc. COM (2017) 713 Final of 29 November 2017, which, in point 3.5, states that “*The CAP should respond more effectively to serious health issues such as those linked to antimicrobial resistance caused by the inappropriate use of antibiotics*”;

HAVING REGARD TO Commission Recommendation (EU) 2016/336 of 8 March 2016 on the implementation of Council Directive 2008/120/EC laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs as regards measures to reduce the need for tail-docking;

HAVING REGARD TO Article 224 bis of Decree-Law No 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Law No. 77 of 17 July 2020, on ‘Urgent health measures, support for work and the economy, as well as social policies related to the COVID-19 epidemiological emergency’, establishing the ‘National Quality System for Animal Welfare’, in order to ensure an increased level of food quality and the economic, social and environmental sustainability of livestock production processes, to improve animal welfare and health conditions and to reduce environmental emissions;

WHEREAS that Article 224 bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Law No 77 of 17 July 2020, also establishes that:

- one or more decrees of the Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry (MASAF) and the Minister of Health, according to their respective competencies, adopted after agreement at the Permanent Conference for relations between the State, the regions and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano, shall define the production regulations, the distinctive mark identifying compliant products, the procedures for harmonising and coordinating authorised certification and quality systems, the supervision and control measures and any additional provisions necessary for the implementation of the National Quality System for Animal Welfare;



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- by decree of the MASAF, adopted in agreement with the Minister of Health, a technical scientific body is established and regulated, with the task of defining the regime and methods of management of the National Quality System for Animal Welfare;

HAVING REGARD TO Legislative Decree No. 146 of 26 March 2001 concerning the implementation of Directive 98/58/EC on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes.

HAVING REGARD TO Legislative Decree No. 122 of 7 July 2011 concerning the implementation of Directive 2008/120/EC, which lays down minimum standards for the protection of pigs.

HAVING REGARD TO Legislative Decree No. 181 of 27 September 2010 concerning the implementation of Directive 2007/43/EC which lays down minimum standards for the protection of chickens kept for meat production;

HAVING REGARD TO Legislative Decree No. 126 of 7 July 2011 concerning the implementation of Directive 2008/119/EC, which sets out minimum standards for the protection of calves.

HAVING REGARD TO Legislative Decree No. 267 of 29 July 2003 concerning the implementation of Directives 1999/74/EC and 2002/4/EC on the protection of laying hens and the registration of relevant rearing establishments.

HAVING REGARD TO Article 1(2) of Decree-Law No. 91 of 24 June 2014, converted, with amendments, by Law No. 116 of 11 August 2014;

HAVING REGARD TO Legislative Decree No. 136 of 5 August 2022 on the “Implementation of Article 14(2)(a), (b), (e), (f), (h), (i), (l), (n), (o) and (p) of Law No. 53 of 22 April 2021 to adapt and align national legislation on the prevention and control of animal diseases transmissible to animals or humans with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016” and, in particular, Article 11, pursuant to which the operator formally designates a suitably qualified veterinary surgeon as the person responsible for transmitting to the competent authorities, via entry into the *ClassyFarm.it* information system, the information and data collected in the course of surveillance activities and animal health inspections, including the results of laboratory analyses;

HAVING REGARD TO Directive (EU) 2015/1535 of 9 September 2015 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical regulations and of rules on Information Society services;

WHEREAS that production regulations and the distinctive mark used to identify a product intended for human consumption may be regarded as a technical regulation within the meaning of Article 1(1)(f)(iii) of the aforementioned Directive (EU) 2015/1535;

HAVING REGARD TO Note No. 0218950 of 6 July 2022, in which the Ministry of Economic Development announced that, on 21 June 2022, notification had been made to the European Commission (registered under No. 2022/0439/I) pursuant to Directive (EU) 2015/1535 of the draft technical regulation concerning the draft interministerial decree setting out the rules for the ‘National Quality System for Animal Welfare’;



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HAVING REGARD TO the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister of Health of 2 August 2022, published in the Official Gazette No. 279 of 29 November 2022, containing “Regulations governing the National Animal Welfare Quality System, established pursuant to Article 224-bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Act No. 77 of 17 July 2020” and establishing the Technical and Scientific Committee for Animal Welfare (CTSBA);

HAVING REGARD, in particular, to Article 1(5) of the aforementioned Decree of 2 August 2022, which provides that, by one or more decrees issued by the Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister of Health, on the proposal of the Technical and Scientific Committee for Animal Welfare (CTSBA), subject to agreement within the Permanent Conference on Relations between the State and the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, the certification requirements relating to the rearing of animal species of zootechnical interest within the framework of the SQNBA shall be defined;

HAVING REGARD TO message No. 303 of 15 September 2022, by which the European Commission, pursuant to Article 5(2) of Directive (EU) 2015/1535, submitted its comments on the aforementioned draft technical regulation, registered *under* No 2022/0439/I, noting in particular that the substantive requirements concerning animal welfare would be laid down in subsequent acts pursuant to Article 1(5) of the notified draft and inviting the Italian authorities to notify those acts separately;

HAVING REGARD TO Note No. 0570186 of 8 November 2022, in response to message No. 303, in which the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests informed the European Commission that the notified draft technical regulation had defined the scope of the substantive requirements for inclusion in the SQNBA, specifying them – as already provided for in Article 224-bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 2020 – as necessarily ‘stricter’, that is to say, more selective and stringent, than the mandatory minimum requirements laid down by current EU legislation, whilst also setting out the methods and criteria used for their formulation, through the guidelines issued by a body with appropriate technical and scientific expertise, namely the Technical and Scientific Committee on Animal Welfare (CTSBA).

WHEREAS that, in the aforementioned Note, the MASAF also undertook to send to the European Commission, for information purposes only, the certification schemes (specifications) to be adopted and the relevant requirements by animal species and production sector drawn up by the CTSBA;

HAVING REGARD TO the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister of Health No. 0122818 of 24 February 2023, by which the members of the Technical and Scientific Committee on Animal Welfare (CTSBA) were appointed in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 of Article 10 of the interministerial decree of 2 August 2022, as well as the subsequent decrees of the Director of the Directorate-General for Rural Development of the MASAF No. 0377557 of 19 July 2023; No. 0299411 of 2 July 2025; No. 0411421 of 3 September 2025 and No. 0114437 of 9 March 2026, which provided for the replacement of certain members of the CTSBA;



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HAVING REGARD TO the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister for Health of 23 October 2024, published in the Official Gazette No. 262 of 8 November 2024, concerning “Amendment of Annexes 1 and 2 to the interministerial decree of 2 August 2022 and approval of the certification requirements (specifications) relating to cattle and pigs reared outdoors for fattening, within the framework of the ‘National Quality System for Animal Welfare’ established pursuant to Article 224-bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Act No. 77 of 17 July 2020”;

HAVING REGARD TO MASAF note No 645253 of 6 December 2024, by which the aforementioned interministerial decree of 23 October 2024 was forwarded to the European Commission – Contact Point for Directive (EU) 2015/1535;

HAVING REGARD TO the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister for Health of 21 July 2025, published in the Official Gazette No. 177 of 1 August 2025, concerning “Amendments to Annexes 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the decree of 23 October 2024 amending Annexes 1 and 2 of the decree of 2 August 2022 and approving the certification requirements (specifications) relating to cattle and pigs reared outdoors for fattening, within the framework of the ‘National Quality Scheme for Animal Welfare’”;

CONSIDERING, not least to facilitate the work of operators in the sector, that a unified and coordinated text should be adopted for the SNQBA regulations and the relevant production specifications;

HAVING REGARD TO Note No. 0075964 of 17 February 2026, by which the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy notified the European Commission on 13 February 2026 (registered under No. 2026/0075/IT) pursuant to Directive (EU) 2015/1535, of the draft technical regulation relating to the interministerial decree governing the ‘*Coordinated text on the regulation of the “National Quality System for Animal Welfare” established pursuant to Article 224-bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020, No. 34, introduced by Conversion Act No. 77 of 17 July 2020, and the specifications setting out the certification requirements*’;

HAVING REGARD TO message No. 009 of 22 April 2026, by which the European Commission notified the closure of notification No. 2026/0075/IT, stating that it concerned measures already in force in the Member State, and inviting Italy to assess the advisability of adopting, following notification, a *new* draft intended to replace the texts already in force;

CONSIDERING, also in light of the aforementioned communication from the European Commission, that a decree should be issued which:

- provides for the adoption of the SQNBA framework regulations, including the operational procedures for managing the System, the CTSBA regulations, the requirements for certification bodies, the procedures for the certification process, and finally the fundamental requirements for food business operators wishing to join the System;
- attaches, as annexes, the certification requirements (specifications) for free-range fattening pigs and cattle that the CTSBA has positively assessed;



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- ensures the simultaneous repeal of the aforementioned decrees of 2 August 2022, 23 October 2024 and 21 July 2025;

HAVING REGARD to the advisability of simultaneously making certain further amendments to the aforementioned production specifications, as requested by the additional guidance provided by the CTSBA and by operators in the sector, and as necessary to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the SQNBA;

HAVING REGARD, in this regard, to Minutes No. 14 of 10 July 2025 of the Technical and Scientific Committee on Animal Welfare (CTSBA), which issued a favourable opinion on the 'Regulations on certification requirements for fattening pigs (over 50 kg) reared outdoors', with particular reference to the animals' shelters and grazing;

HAVING REGARD TO the Decree of the Minister of Health of 6 September 2023, published in the Official Gazette No. 243 of 17 October 2023, setting out "Definition of the procedures for delivering training programmes on the system for the identification and registration of operators, establishments and animals for animal operators and professionals, in accordance with the training requirements set out in Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 2016/429", as amended by the Decree of the Ministry of Health of 23 December 2025, published in the Official Gazette No. 24 of 30 January 2026;

HAVING REGARD in particular, to paragraph 2-bis of Article 1 of the aforementioned Decree of 6 September 2023, which provides that 'Participation in the training programmes referred to in this Decree, and passing the relevant assessment, shall be valid for the purposes of fulfilling the training obligations regarding animal welfare, as referred to in Article 2, paragraph 2 of Legislative Decree No. 146/2001; Article 4(1) of Legislative Decree No. 181/2010; and Article 5 of Legislative Decree No. 122/2011; and in relation to combating antimicrobial resistance, as referred to in Article 29(4) of Legislative Decree No. 218/2023'.

CONSIDERING it necessary to coordinate the provisions of the SQNBA with those relating to the training obligations of animal health practitioners;

WHEREAS that the current legislation on animal protection, referred to above, lays down the minimum legal requirements regarding animal welfare, the application and assessment of which fall within the remit of the veterinary surgeon, as part of the self-monitoring activities carried out pursuant to the aforementioned Article 11 of Legislative Decree No. 136 of 2022, as well as official veterinary public health controls;

WHEREAS the veterinary surgeon designated pursuant to Article 11 of Legislative Decree No. 136 of 2022 is involved in the health management of a livestock holding, acting as an adviser to the farmer, and is, in particular, required to: carry out the animal health inspections referred to in Article 25 of Regulation (EU) 2016/429, assisting the farmer in the monitoring and management of the health of the animals on the farm; verify, and make available to the competent authorities by entering them into the national information system *ClassyFarm.it*, the information and data referred to in Article 11 of Legislative Decree No. 136 of 2022, collected on the farm, including veterinary



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activities carried out, pharmacological treatments and diagnostic tests; to collaborate with the veterinary services of the competent authorities, monitoring the epidemiological situation on farms and transmitting data for disease surveillance; coordinate health practices with fellow professionals and local health authorities;

WHEREAS, for the purposes of joining the SQNBA scheme, the applicant is required to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements as determined by the assessment carried out by the official veterinary surgeon or the veterinary surgeon referred to in Article 11 of Legislative Decree No. 136 of 2022, as part of the most recent self-inspection carried out within the preceding twelve months, and that, therefore, compliance with these requirements is certified based on an on-site inspection carried out by a veterinary surgeon;

CONSIDERING that adherence to the SQNBA scheme and compliance with the conditions laid down in the specifications guarantee higher standards of animal welfare than the minimum requirements set out in current legislation, with particular reference to zootechnical requirements;

WHEREAS, not least by virtue of the standardisation process being pursued and the automated procedures introduced, inter alia, through the Cooperation Agreement signed between the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Experimental Zooprophyllactic Institute of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna (IZSLER), approved by decree of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry on 31 March 2025, the checks carried out during the SQNBA certification phase of the farm, by the assessor appointed by the certification body designated by the farmer, consist of a descriptive assessment of the certification requirements – predominantly of a zootechnical nature – by completing the inspection form available on the *ClassyFarm* platform;

HAVING TAKEN NOTE of the objective shortage of veterinary surgeons highlighted by both the certification bodies and the trade associations operating in the sector of animals of zootechnical interest, particularly in remote and mountainous areas, where the majority of livestock farms seeking SQNBA certification are concentrated;

WHEREAS that the aforementioned objective shortage of veterinary surgeons makes it impossible to ensure the effective implementation of the SQNBA;

HAVING REGARD, therefore, to the need to expand the range of qualified professionals authorised to carry out assessments for the purposes of issuing SQNBA certification, given the objective shortage of veterinary s specialising in livestock, particularly in remote and mountainous areas, where the majority of farms seeking SQNBA certification are concentrated; the standardisation and automated processes introduced into the *ClassyFarm* system, which enable farms to be assessed with as little subjective judgement as possible, through the objective verification of predetermined requirements; finally, the mandatory involvement, within the certification process, of at least one veterinary surgeon, given that the assessment of the farm is subject to mandatory review by a Committee comprising at least one veterinary surgeon, whose



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vote is binding for the purposes of continuing *the* certification *process*;

WHEREAS, furthermore, the public interest in promoting exemplary practices amongst livestock farmers, enabling them to offer consumers products whose certified production process constitutes recognised and monetisable added value, whilst respecting the remit of professional bodies, as well as the need, given the high level of efficiency and transparency ensured by the SQNBA, to ensure the sustainability of the certification system and to reduce the burdens and costs for those subject to it;

CONSIDERING it necessary to provide, as a transitional provision, that, during the initial phase of implementation of the SQNBA, the assessment may be carried out by a veterinary surgeon or an agronomist with specific expertise in the livestock sector, for a limited period, at the end of which the aforementioned option shall be reassessed in the light of the results obtained and the verified availability of an adequate number of veterinary surgeons acting as assessors;

CONSIDERING it also necessary to ensure the involvement of a veterinary surgeon should any health-related issues arise during the on-farm assessment phase;

WHEREAS it appropriate to provide that, at the request of members of the SQNBA System, the Technical and Scientific Committee for Animal Welfare may authorise the inclusion of optional information relating to requirements assessed and certified under the SQNBA certification scheme, based on scientific evidence that is clear and not misleading;

CONSIDERING that a deadline should be set for the alignment of existing certifications by the date of entry into force of the specific certification requirements (specifications) for animal species, production type and rearing method, to enable the CTSBA to draw up procedures for the harmonisation and coordination of technical standards already recognised or authorised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests, as well as voluntary certifications issued by certification bodies;

HAVING REGARD TO the note ref. **no. ... of ... 2026**, by which the Ministry of Health expressed its agreement;

APPROVED by the Permanent Conference for Relations between the State, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano at its meeting on -- (Minutes No. /CSR of 2026);

HEREBY DECREES:

Article 1

(Purpose and scope)

1. This Decree lays down the procedure for defining the animal health and welfare requirements, in excess of those of the relevant European and national standards, for the qualification of the management of the breeding process of animals intended for food production, broken down by species, production guideline and farming method, including the management of emissions in



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the establishment, within the framework of the ‘National Quality System for Animal Welfare’, hereinafter referred to as SQNBA. Membership of the SQNBA is on a voluntary basis and the right of access is guaranteed for all operators in the Member States of the European Union legitimately concerned.

2. This Decree also governs the issue of the certification of the compliance with the requirements of the SQNBA, as well as the procedures and methods by which entities in the production chain concerned may market animals from a certified holding or the product of animal origin derived from one or more holdings covered by certification referred to in this Decree.
3. This Decree applies to primary production and food business operators referred to in Article 2, except for operators in the transport phase, unless otherwise stipulated by the certification requirements provided for under the SQNBA.
4. The SQNBA is made up of the provisions of this Decree and the certification requirements by species, production guideline and breeding method, defined according to the procedure established in paragraph 5 and taking into account the indications of Article 224 bis of Decree-Law No 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Law No 77 of 17 July 2020, and the identified priorities of the livestock sector.
5. By one or more decrees of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry (MASAF) and the Minister of Health, on the proposal of the Technical Scientific Committee for Animal Welfare (CTSBA) referred to in Article 10, adopted after agreement at the Permanent Conference for relations between the State, the Regions and the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, the certification requirements relating to the breeding of animal species of zootechnical interest shall be defined, at least on two progressive levels.
6. Without prejudice to the provisions laid down in Article 8 concerning the marketing and labelling of animals and products of primary production, the CTSBA assesses the possibility of providing for the further development of a system of welfare requirements aimed at making it more possible to exploit the various commitments made by producers, broken down by species, production guideline and farming method, in order to improve animal welfare, in accordance with Article 224 bis of Decree-Law No 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Law No 77 of 17 July 2020.

Article 2 (Definitions)

The following definitions shall apply in this Decree:

- **Accreditation:** attestation by an Accreditation Body that a given Certification Body fulfils the criteria established by harmonised standards and, where appropriate, any additional requirements, including those defined in relevant sectoral programmes, to carry out a specific conformity assessment activity;
- **National Database (BDN):** the national computerised database provided for in Article 109(1) of Regulation (EU) No 429/2016 already established by Article 12 of Legislative Decree No 196 of 22 May 1999 at the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Abruzzo e Molise “G.



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Caporale”, accessible through the web applications of the web portal of veterinary information systems www.vetinfo.it .

- **Animal welfare:** an optimal condition achieved in an integrated system that takes into account the ethological characteristics of the species, the rearing method, the density of animals per surface area, nutrition, animal health, biosafety control on the farm, monitoring of the use of veterinary medicines, animal transport conditions, and the control and management of emissions in the establishment;
- **Biosafety:** the set of structural and management measures aimed at reducing and combating the risk of introduction, development and spread of diseases in animals, in an establishment or means of transport or any other site;
- **Chain of Custody (CoC):** a system to ensure the identification and traceability of animals and products of primary production throughout the various stages of production, processing, distribution and marketing, up to the final consumer;
- **Certificate of conformity:** a document issued by a Certification Body to a primary production operator or food business operator or group of food business operators, certifying compliance with the requirements specified in the certification scheme following appropriate conformity assessments;
- **Group of Food Business Operators: the set of food business operators** coordinated by a natural or legal person requesting certification and responsible for compliance with the requirements of the SQNBA as well as the certificate of conformity for the Custody Chain;
- **Rearing method:** how the animal or group of animals is reared (e.g. at posts, in individual stalls or grazing etc.) for all or part of the life cycle, in relation to species, life stage, production guideline or others. It may be differentiated as indoor rearing (with or without outdoor access), outdoor rearing or other methods that may be envisaged and indicated by species, breed, and production guideline by the certification requirements defined by the CTSBA and approved in accordance with the modalities laid down in Article 1(5);
- **Unique registration number:** an alphanumeric code generated by the BDN referring to the establishment in which the activity takes place, the operator’s tax identifier and the species of animals kept;
- **Primary production operator:** any natural or legal person responsible for animals or primary products of animal origin, including, for a limited period, identified by the Tax Code and holder of the unique registration number of the establishment, as defined by Regulation (EU) 2035/2019, registered in the BDN. The person holding the certificate of conformity of the establishment, for the primary production stage. Cooperatives or other recognised forms of association of primary production operators, all of which are members of the SQNBA for the same rearing method, are equated with primary production operators. In this case, the form of



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association is responsible for compliance with the requirements of the SQNBA and holds the certificate of conformity for all associated establishments;

- **Food business operator:** natural or legal person holding the certificate of conformity for the Chain of Custody, responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of food law in the food business under its control, as well as the natural or legal person responsible for transporting the live animals to the slaughterhouse;
- **Certification Body:** the body carrying out conformity assessment services accredited by the National Accreditation Body in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 765/2008;
- **National Accreditation Body:** the only body authorised by that State to carry out accreditation activities in a Member State. In Italy, the Decree of the Ministry for Economic Development of 22 December 2009 designates Accredia as the only Italian national body authorised to carry out accreditation and market surveillance activities;
- **Primary production:** livestock products derived from supply chains for the production of: beef, pork, sheep, goat, buffalo, horse, poultry, and rabbit, and milk derivatives, eggs, and apiculture products, aquaculture products and heliciculture products;
- **Certification scheme:** a set of rules and procedures identifying the subject matter of the conformity assessment and the methods for determining it, in addition to the set of requirements against which the assessment is to be carried out;
- **Rearing system:** the set of structural conditions, including control and management of environmental emissions, feeding, environmental, technological, managerial and sanitary conditions under which the animal or group of animals is reared, for all or part of its life cycle, in relation to species, life stage, production guideline or others, specified by the certification requirements defined by the CTSBA and approved in accordance with the procedures laid down in Article 1(5);
- **Establishment:** premises and facilities of any kind or, in the case of open-air rearing, any environment or place where animals are kept, on a temporary or permanent basis, for the production of food for human use;
- **Assessor:** a person who meets the minimum requirements set out in Annex 1 and is mandated by a Certification Body to perform, individually or as part of a group, the assessment of compliance of a primary sector operator, a food business operator or a group of food business operators with the requirements of the SQNBA;
- **Adult Livestock Unit:** procedure designed to demonstrate whether specific requirements relating to a product, process or service have been met;

Article 3 (Specific provisions)



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1. For the purposes of clear and correct information to the consumer, the production and marketing of animals and products of primary production as well as foodstuffs, with information on animal welfare, farm biosafety and veterinary medicinal products, as required by the certification requirements under the SQNBA, shall take place in accordance with the provisions of this Decree.
2. If, on the date of entry into force of this Decree, such information is already being used and communicated to consumers on the basis of technical standards already recognised or authorised by MASAF, or voluntary certifications issued by Certification Bodies, the procedures provided for in those technical standards or certifications shall be adapted to the contents of this Decree, in accordance with the procedures set out in Article 7.
3. The adaptation referred to in paragraph 2 is not provided for the information relating to the rearing system and which in any case does not concern animal welfare, biosafety on farms and veterinary medicinal products.

Article 4

(Criteria and procedures for joining the SQNBA)

1. The application for membership of the SQNBA shall be submitted by the primary production operator or a food business operator or a group of operators in the food sector, for the activities subject to certification.
2. To join the SQNBA, entities referred to in paragraph 1 must operate in accordance with current sector-specific legislation.
3. To join the SQNBA, the entities referred to in paragraph 1 must submit a specific application to a certification body chosen from those listed on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.
4. The parties referred to in paragraph 1 must ensure that the requirements laid down in this decree are met at all stages of rearing, production, transport, processing, marketing and storage. They must also take measures to ensure that live animals and/or certified and non-certified products under the SQNBA scheme are kept separate in time or space.
5. Those who meet the following requirements and follow the procedures set out below may apply for membership of the SQNBA:
 - a) Primary production operators:
 - a.1) Requirements:
 - identified in accordance with the specific European Union and national legislation in force;



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- operators who participate in the risk-based categorisation system for livestock farms by collecting and processing information relating to self-monitoring and surveillance activities in accordance with the guidelines set out in Article 9;
- operators who comply, where provided for, with the requirements for access to the certification scheme for the animal species, the production guideline and the rearing method of interest laid down in the certification requirements defined by the CTSBA and approved in accordance with the procedures laid down in Article 1(5);
- operators who guarantee a system for the identification and traceability of animals and products of primary production to ensure compliance with the provisions of the SQNBA;

a.2) Mode:

- in the application for membership, they must indicate:
 - i. the animal species, production orientation and farming method to be certified, in addition to the unique registration number and tax code of the Operator; in the case of cooperatives or other recognised forms of association, the same data are required for each member Operator;
 - ii. any direct sales activity in the form of SQNBA certified products;
 - iii. the name of the veterinarian formally appointed by the Operator to enter the evaluation data of the farm in the portal referred to in Article 9;
 - iv. a commitment to meet the defined SQNBA certification requirements and procedures;
- an individual primary production operator may submit several applications for membership relating to different species, rearing methods and production guidelines intended to be certified by the SQNBA;
- membership to the SQNBA for an animal species, production guideline and rearing method means that all animals of the species covered by the membership, under the responsibility of the primary production operator, are managed in accordance with the procedures and conform to the certification requirements defined by the CTSBA and approved as set out in Article 1(5).

b) Food business operators:

b.1 Requirements:

- operators who are recognised or registered in accordance with the specific European Union and national legislation in force;
- operators who adopt the chain of custody system for the SQNBA in accordance with the requirements of Annex 2;



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b.2 Mode (s):

- in the application for membership, they shall give:
 - i. the data and legal references of the food business operator applying;
 - ii. the details relating to the approval of the food business Operator (approval number) or their registration (protocol and date of activity notification);
 - iii. the relevant stage(s) in the supply chain concerned;
 - iv. a brief description of the food business operator, its organisation, the activities carried out and the number of animals/volumes treated;
 - v. a commitment to meet the defined SQNBA certification requirements and procedures;
 - vi. that they comply with the requirements of the current sector legislation for traceability and that they do not have pending requirements, yet to be addressed, by the competent authorities for that sector.
- If membership of the SQNBA takes place through a Group of Food Business Operators, the SQNBA shall submit the application indicating each food business operator involved in accordance with the procedures set out in this Article.

Article 5

(Certification Body)

1. The Certification Body which intends to operate under the SQNBA must be accredited to standard UNI CEI EN ISO IEC 17065 in the version in force, in accordance with the SQNBA certification scheme, for the animal species and production orientation of interest and comply with the requirements and procedures for the certification process laid down in Annex 1 to this Decree.
2. In accordance with the procedures set out in the aforementioned Annex 1, the Certification Body must be registered on a list maintained by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.
3. The registration shall last five years and may be suspended or withdrawn in the event of serious non-compliances or generalised deficiencies in the control system which may compromise the reliability and effectiveness of the system and of the certification body itself, as defined in Annex 1, Part A, paragraph 2.
4. Suspension of registration depending on the seriousness of the case may last from three to six months. At the end of the suspension period, the Certification Body must demonstrate that it has resolved the issues identified. Otherwise, the registration shall be revoked.
5. Certification Bodies shall make available to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Ministry of Health, as well as to the Accreditation Body, the results of the assessment activities carried out on Operators participating in the SQNBA. The information



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obligations imposed on Certification Bodies are fulfilled by uploading the data to the system referred to in Article 9, which, through interoperability mechanisms, makes the information uploaded by the Certification Body available in the Supervisory Database (BDV), referred to in the Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry of 16 February 2012.

6. In accordance with Article 1(2) of Decree-Law No. 91 of 24 June 2014, converted with amendments by Law No. 116 of 11 August 2014, Certification Bodies are also responsible for uploading data to the Single Register of Inspections of Agricultural Holdings (RUCI).

Article 6

(Certification activities)

1. The Certification Body, by means of documentary and on-site checks, in accordance with the provisions of Annex 1, Part C, shall assess the requirements of the certification process and the compliance of applicants who have applied for membership of the SQNBA. Such assessments include the suitability of the primary sector operator's or food business operator's or Group of food business operators' management procedures in light of the requirements of the SQNBA, verification of the ability of the self-check system to meet the requirements of the SQNBA and maintain the identification and traceability of animals and products throughout the supply chain, records to support the entire process, as well as verification of the correspondence, proper use and transfer of labelling information pursuant to Article 8.
2. The Certification Body shall assess the fulfilment of the requirements for the required certification by means of an initial conformity assessment with the individual applicant who applies to join the SQNBA. In addition, it shall verify the non-compliance, i.e. the resolution of those found, and following a positive assessment of the requirements, shall issue a certificate of conformity attesting to the inclusion of the entity or group in the certification scheme under the SQNBA.
3. The Certification Bodies shall, over time, reassess the maintenance of the conformity of the certified entities in accordance with the timeframes and procedures laid down in Annex 1.
4. Failure to comply with the provisions of this decree, including the loss of eligibility criteria, constitutes a case of non-compliance which must be managed and resolved by certified bodies in accordance with the Certification Body's guidelines.
5. In the event of non-compliance, the Certification Body shall suspend the certification in accordance with Annex 1, Part C, point 10.
6. During the suspension period, the entity is required to continue to apply the requirements of the SQNBA certification process, without prejudice to the prohibition to sell animals and market products with indications referring to the SQNBA.
7. Failure to resolve the causes that led to the suspension of certification within the prescribed timeframe leads to its withdrawal and exclusion from the SQNBA, in accordance with the procedures described in Annex 1.



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8. The Certification Body shall publish on its institutional website the list of certified entities belonging to the SQNBA and subject to its own control, distinguishing between primary production and the food sector. With reference to each, it must also report:
 - a) the health registration or authorisation number or approval number of the primary production operator or the food business operator;
 - b) the identification code of the Operator or Group of Operators in the primary or food sector assigned by the Certification Body;
 - c) the species, production guideline and rearing method of the animals covered by the SQNBA certification (for primary production operators only);
 - d) an explicit reference to suspended or revoked certificates.
9. The list of certified entities participating in the SQNBA, referred to in paragraph 8, is also available on the MASAF institutional website.

Article 7

(Terms and procedures for adaptation to the SQNBA - Transitional rule)

1. In order to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 3(1) and (2), the adaptation must be made within twenty-four months of the date of entry into force of the specific certification requirements for animal species, production guideline and rearing method, as defined in Article 1(5).
2. The technical standards and voluntary certifications referred to in Article 3(2) shall be considered valid and effective at the same time as those issued pursuant to this Decree until the end of the transitional period defined in paragraph 1.
3. Failure to comply with paragraph 1 shall make it impossible to use the information covered by this Decree in the context of the aforementioned technical standards and voluntary certifications.

Article 8

(Marketing and labelling)

- 1) For the purposes of this Decree, the marketing of animals, products of primary production and food products derived therefrom must include the following information on the sales documents or on the label, indicating the level reached from progressive levels of certification:
 - a) 'National Animal Welfare Quality System' or, alternatively, 'SQN Animal Welfare'. This indication may be replaced by the SQNBA identification logo, defined by a subsequent decree of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Ministry of Health.
 - b) The rearing method, as may be identified in the certification scheme, relating to the species and production guideline, approved under the SQNBA.



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- c) “*Reared in*” refers to the SQNBA-certified establishment in which the animal’s rearing cycle is carried out in accordance with the requirements, procedures and timeframes set out in the certification schemes referred to in Article 1, paragraph 5. In accordance with the provisions of this decree, the label may bear the wording ‘*From a farm ... [country of origin] ... SQNBA-certified*’ or ‘*Sourced from a farm ... [nationality]... SQNBA-certified*’; and where the animal was born, reared and slaughtered in the same Member State, this information may also be provided in the combined form ‘*Origin ... [name of Member State]*’, accompanied, where appropriate, by the indication of a geographical region.
 - d) Any other information required, in relation to the species, production guideline and breeding method, from the certification requirements approved under the SQNBA.
2. The information referred to in paragraph 1 shall also be accompanied by the following information:
- a) the registration code of the Certification Body chosen by the Operator;
 - b) the identification code of the food business operator or Group of food business operators packaging the product for release for consumption or of the primary production operator where the animal or product is sold directly on the farm.
3. The information referred to in paragraph 1 must appear in the same field of vision as the label of the pre-packed product as defined in Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011. For non-pre-packed products intended for the final consumer, this information must be clearly and prominently displayed on the counter.
4. At the stages prior to marketing to the final consumer, the information referred to in this Article shall be indicated on the sales documents accompanying the live animals and, in the case of the product of primary production or food, may also be expressed by means of barcode or alphanumeric code or QR-code or other appropriate manner, including on their packaging.
5. The transfer to the final consumer of the information required by the SQNBA referred to in this Decree shall take place through the chain of custody certified by an accredited Certification Body, except in the case of direct sales to the animal rearing farm.
6. Without prejudice to other specific provisions concerning the provision of information to consumers, the particulars referred to in paragraph 1 shall be indicated:
- a) in the main field of vision of the labelling, where components of animal origin from SQNBA-certified holdings are the only ingredient or the certified ingredients are present as a whole as a percentage greater than or equal to 75 % in the product obtained and placed on the market for final consumption;
 - b) in the visual field of the label, the name of the ingredient, its percentage, and the SQNBA information referred to in paragraph 1(a), in all cases where the SQNBA-certified ingredients represent less than 75% provided that the same ingredient comes entirely from SQNBA-certified farms.



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7. In foodstuffs, the presence of the same ingredient certified and not certified under this Decree shall not be permitted at the same time.
8. At the request of members of the SQNBA Scheme, the Technical and Scientific Committee for Animal Welfare may authorise the inclusion of optional information relating to requirements assessed and certified under the SQNBA certification scheme, provided that such information is based on scientific evidence, is clear and is not misleading.

Article 9

(Risk-based rearing facility categorisation information system ClassyFarm)

1. ClassyFarm is the information system of the Ministry for Health, managed by the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia and Emilia Romagna (hereinafter IZSLER) and integrated into the national veterinary portal www.vetinfo.it, defining the risk-based categorisation of farms by collecting and processing information relating to self-checking and monitoring carried out by Operators in accordance with Articles 24 and 25 of Regulation (EU) 429/2016.
2. For the correct application of the SQNBA in the holding, ClassyFarm permits the:
 - a) verification of the requirements for access to the SQNBA route referred to in Article 4 of this Decree;
 - b) the allocation of login details for access to the area dedicated to the Certification Bodies, as referred to in Article 5;
 - c) the evaluator, appointed by the Certification Body, to include the results of the verification referred to in point (a) in the appropriate section of Classyfarm for the continuation of the certification process;
 - d) the ensuring of an adequate level of interoperability with other public information systems as regards the availability and usability of information, for those entitled, relating to biosafety, drug consumption and animal welfare aspects to ensure the most appropriate sharing of such information between the public entities concerned for the purposes set out in this Decree in accordance with the rules in force for the protection of data sensitivity;
 - e) the preparation of an information flow allowing the Certification Body to obtain information on non-compliances by primary sector operators and food business operators detected by the Veterinary Service of ULSS Companies, together with any relevant requirements, in order to implement the provisions of Annex 1, Part C.
3. IZSLER guarantees, through the upgrading of its IT system, facilities and staff, free of charge to the Ministry for Health, the full functioning of the ClassyFarm system.

Article 10

(Technical Scientific Committee for Animal Welfare)

1. The Technical and Scientific Committee on Animal Welfare (CTSBA) is responsible for defining the certification requirements relating to the rearing of animal species of livestock



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interest and for proposing amendments and additions. It also defines the distinctive mark used to identify compliant products, the procedures for harmonising and coordinating technical standards already recognised or authorised by MASAF or voluntary certifications issued by certification bodies on the date of entry into force of this provision, the methods for using the data available in national and regional databases in the agricultural and health sectors, as well as any additional information useful for implementing the system. The CTSBA is also entrusted with the task of evaluating the possibility of implementing a transparent multi-level labelling system, relating to compliance with the growing commitments related to animal welfare in farms.

2. On the basis of the information available in ClassyFarm, pertaining to the SQNBA, the CTSBA shall draw up a report, at least every two years, detailing the activities carried out during the reference period. These reports will be made public on the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry's institutional website.
3. The CTSBA shall ensure the participation of stakeholders, in the performance of its functions, through targeted consultations.
4. The CTSBA, which operates within the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, includes:
 - a) two expert representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry;
 - b) two expert representatives of the Ministry of Health;
 - c) six representatives of the Regions and Autonomous Provinces, including three for the Agricultural sector and three for the Animal Health sector, appointed by the Standing Conference for relations between the State, the Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano;
 - d) a representative of Accredia;
 - e) three experts in animal welfare were appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, two of whom belong to the Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics;
 - f) three experts in the field of animal welfare, including two appointed by the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia and Emilia-Romagna, as the headquarters of the National Reference Centre for Animal Welfare (CReNBA) and manager of the ClassyFarm system, and one appointed by the Experimental Zooprophyllactic Institute of Abruzzo and Molise.
5. The roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the CTSBA are held on a rotating basis, for a term of two years, by a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry or a representative of the Ministry of Health.
6. The CTSBA can make use of additional experts in production processes covering the entire supply chain.



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7. The secretarial functions of the CTSBA are carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.
8. No form of compensation, financial or otherwise, shall be received by the members of the CTSBA.

Section 11.

(Supervision of Certification Bodies)

1. The supervision of certification bodies is carried out by the Central Inspectorate for Quality Protection and Fraud Prevention of Agri-Food Products (ICQRF) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.
2. Supervisory activities shall be carried out through the organisation of audits or inspections, aimed at verifying that there are no deficiencies in requirements and deficiencies on the part of the Certification Body in the performance of certification tasks and that the Certification Body has taken appropriate and timely corrective action to resolve such deficiencies, where detected.

Section 12.

(Specifications for certification under the SQNBA)

1. Pursuant to Article 10 of this decree, the following specifications, set out in Annex 3 to this decree, apply to certification under the National Quality System for Animal Welfare (SQNBA):
 - a) Regulations governing certification requirements for fattening pigs (over 50 kg) raised outdoors (Annex 3.1);
 - b) Regulations governing certification requirements for dairy cattle kept in stalls (Annex 3.2);
 - c) Regulations on the welfare of beef cattle kept in stables (Annex 3.3);
 - d) Guidelines on animal welfare for cattle on small-scale farms (Annex 3.4);
 - e) Regulations on animal welfare for cattle reared with either exclusively or predominantly on pasture (Annex 3.5).

Section 13.

(Repeals)

1. Upon the entry into force of this decree, the following are repealed:



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- a) the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister for Health of 2 August 2022, published in the Official Gazette No. 279 of 29 November 2022, containing “Regulations governing the National Animal Welfare Quality System, established pursuant to Article 224-bis of Decree-Law No. 34 of 19 May 2020, introduced by Conversion Act No. 77 of 17 July 2020”;
- b) the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister for Health of 23 October 2024, published in the Official Gazette No. 262 of 8 November 2024, containing “Amendment of Annexes 1 and 2 to the Interministerial Decree of 2 August 2022 and approval of the certification requirements (specifications) relating to cattle and pigs reared outdoors for fattening”;
- c) the decree of the Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Minister for Health of 21 July 2025, published in the Official Gazette No. 177 of 1 August 2025, amending “Annexes 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the decree of 23 October 2024 amending Annexes 1 and 2 of the decree of 2 August 2022 and approving the certification requirements (specifications) relating to cattle and pigs reared outdoors for fattening, within the framework of the ‘National Quality System for Animal Welfare’”.

Section 14.

(Financial invariance)

The implementation of the provisions of this Decree must not result in new or increased burdens on public finances. The Administrations concerned shall carry out the obligations provided for in this Decree with the human, financial and instrumental resources already available under current legislation.

This Decree shall enter into force on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette of the Italian Republic and shall apply from the same date.

Minister for Agriculture, Food Sovereignty
and Forestry
Hon. Francesco Lollobrigida

The Minister of Health
Prof. Orazio Schillaci



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Annex 1

Requirements of the Certification Bodies and the Certification Process

Part A

General requirements

Certification activities are carried out by bodies accredited to the UNI CEI EN ISO IEC 17065 standard in its current version and registered in the appropriate list of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry (MASAF), as referred to in Article 5 of the Decree.

1. Procedure for registering the certification body in the list held by MASAF

In order to be registered in the list referred to in Article 5 of the Decree, the Certification Body (CB) must submit a specific application to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, in accordance with the guidelines issued by the same ministry and made available on the portal www.politicheagricole.it.

The application for registration, signed by the legal representative, must contain the personal and tax identification data, telephone numbers and certified email address, for any communication from the Certification Body, and must be accompanied by the following documents:

- a) communication issued by the National Accreditation Body (ACCREDIA) certifying the positive outcome of the verification at the Body's headquarters during the initial accreditation phase for SQNBA. The certification body must send the accreditation certificate within 12 months of the date of inclusion in the list;
- b) a procedure prepared by the Certification Body to define the process, rules, responsibilities and methods for carrying out the certification activity at the Operators that are members of the SQNBA, including procedures for the management of non-compliances and related measures, as well as procedures for issuing certificates and handling complaints and appeals;
- c) control plan approved by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry on the proposal of the Technical Scientific Group responsible for drafting the SQNBA control plans, drawn up on the basis of the certification scheme for which accreditation has been requested, which defines the minimum control activities of the Certification Body with regard to Operators participating in the SQNBA, the methods and timing of assessment, the conditions that determine non-compliance (NC) and their severity (minor or major), as well as the corrective actions that the Operator must implement to restore compliance and the cases in which additional measures are applicable (removal of indications, suspension, revocation);
- d) a qualification procedure, training and monitoring of staff involved in certification activities for the SQNBA;



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- e) a nominative and functional organisational chart relating to the activities of the SQNBA;
- f) a list of assessors qualified to operate for the SQNBA, separated into primary production and/or chain of custody;
- g) curricula of the Certification Body staff involved in the work of the SQNBA and related declaration of absence of a conflict of interest;
- h) forms used for evaluation activities;
- i) the criteria for the definition and application of tariffs to operators;
- j) a model contract to be concluded for the certification activity.

The relevant department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, having received the above-mentioned documentation and following a positive outcome of the preliminary investigation, shall assign an identification code to the certification body and proceed to enter it in the relevant register published on the Ministry's official website: www.politicheagricole.it.

The Certification Body is required to notify the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry of any substantial changes to the documents previously filed for inclusion in the ministerial list.

2. Suspension or Revocation of the Certification Body's Registration in the list held by MASAF

In accordance with Article 5 of the SQNBA Decree, the conditions determining the suspension or revocation of the registration of the Certification Bodies are defined:

a) Suspension:

- non-compliance with the rules laid down in the control plan;
- non-compliance with certification procedures;
- impediment to the exercise of supervision or failure to comply with the requirements imposed as a result of supervisory activities;
- general deficiencies in the system of controls which may compromise the reliability and effectiveness of the system and of the certification body itself;
- adoption of discriminatory behaviour vis-à-vis operators subject to control;
- failure to communicate or delay in communicating the results of the controls by entering them in the information system referred to in Article 9 of the Decree;
- failure to communicate or delay in communicating non-compliances (NC) found with the Operator;
- failure by the CB to adopt measures corresponding to the NC cases detected with the Operators.



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b) Revocation:

- loss of accreditation;
- three suspension measures or a total suspension period of more than nine months during the five-year period of registration;
- loss of the requirements for inclusion in the list referred to in Article 5 of the Decree.

The Central Inspectorate for Quality Protection and Fraud Prevention of Agri-Food Products (ICQRF), referred to in Article 11 of the Decree, shall notify the competent Office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry of the results of the supervision and critical situations for the adoption of measures to suspend or revoke registration.

Part B

Requirements for the Certification Body staff

Certification bodies that conduct SQNBA conformity assessment activities must have sufficient personnel and equipment to ensure compliance with SQNBA requirements.

The Certification Body must define tasks and responsibilities for access, with the assignment of credentials, to the dedicated area of the information system referred to in Article 9 of the Decree and assumes responsibility for the incoming and outgoing communications necessary for the control and supervision of the SQNBA.

Certification activities must be carried out impartially by staff of the Certification Body who are not involved in self-assessment activities (for primary production operators) or consultancy work at the plants or companies being assessed.

The assessment at primary production operators' premises must be carried out by a veterinary surgeon and an agronomist, in accordance with their respective areas of expertise.

On a transitional basis, until 31 December 2027, the aforementioned assessment may be carried out by a veterinary surgeon or an agronomist with specific expertise in the livestock sector. Should the assessor, who is an agronomist, identify any health-related issues whilst carrying out the checks required by the regulations, they shall involve the veterinary surgeon to complete the assessment process. Before the end of the transitional period, the Technical and Scientific Committee on Animal Welfare will assess whether an extension is appropriate, based on the results achieved and the confirmed availability of a sufficient number of veterinary assessors.

The Certification Bodies must use staff dedicated to the assessment, review and decision-making phases meeting the following competence requirements, for the different functions:



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a. Minimum competence requirements for assessment functions

Requirem ents	Primary production: - Veterinarian - Agronomist	Primary production - other professionals	Supply chain
Educational qualifi cation	· Degree in Veterinary Medicine: LM42; · Animal Science and Animal Technology: LM86; · Agricultural Sciences and Technologies: LM69; - Registration with the relevant professional body.	- Degree in: · Agricultural Sciences and Technologies: LM69; · Food Science and Technology: LM70; · Animal Science and Animal Technology: LM86; · Agricultural and Forestry Sciences and Technologies: L25; · Food Science and Technology: L26; · Animal Science and Animal Production Technology: L38; - Other equivalent qualifications. - Registration with the respective professional associations, if the qualification does not qualify.	- Degree in: · Veterinary Medicine: LM42; · Agricultural Sciences and Technologies: LM69; · Food Science and Technology: LM70; · Animal Science and Animal Technology: LM86; · Biology: LM6; · Agricultural and Forestry Sciences and Technologies: L25; · Food Science and Technology: L26; · Animal Science and Animal Production Technology: L38; · Biological Sciences: L13; · Agricultural Biotechnology: LM7; · Industrial Biotechnology: LM8; · Medical, Veterinary and Pharmaceutical



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Requirem ents	Primary production: - Veterinarian - Agronomist	Primary production - other professionals	Supply chain
			Biotechnology: LM9; · Natural Sciences: LM60;
			· Environmental and Territorial Sciences and Technologies: LM75; · Science and Technology for the Environment and Nature: L32. - Professional degree: · Agricultural, Food and Forestry Technician: LP02 - Higher secondary education diploma in agricultural policy; - Other equivalent qualifications.
Work experien ce	- At least 1 year's work experience on farms rearing the species covered by the certification. The required experience is reduced to six months for the cases listed in the 'Practical training' section.	- At least 1 year's work experience on farms rearing the species covered by the certification. The required experience is reduced to six months for the cases listed in the 'Practical training' section.	- For graduates: work experience of at least 1 year on traceability in the certified supply chain. - For graduates: work experience of at least 2 years on traceability in the certified supply chain.



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Requirem ents	Primary production: - Veterinarian - Agronomist	Primary production - other professionals	Supply chain
Theoretic al training	- Training course, lasting a minimum of 16 hours in total, on the protection of animal health and welfare, biosecurity standards and the correct use of	- Training course on the functioning and operation of the ClassyFarm information system, relating to the areas dedicated to the SQNBA. - A course of at least 16 hours on the techniques of	- Training course aimed at learning about and using the ClassyFarm information system, specifically relating to the areas dedicated to the SQNBA.
	medicines, traceability, and epidemiological surveillance systems and networks in veterinary public health. - Training course on the functioning and operation of the ClassyFarm system, relating to the areas dedicated to the SQNBA. - A training course on the ClassyFarm information system for the certified animal species. - A course of at least 16 hours on audit techniques for compliance assessment	Conformity assessment audits in accordance with the requirements of the UNI EN ISO 19011 standard. - Knowledge of the National Quality System for Animal Welfare.	- A course of at least 16 hours on audit techniques for compliance assessment according to UNI EN ISO 19011. - Training on traceability and the chain of custody. - Knowledge of the National Quality System for Animal Welfare.



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Requirements	Primary production: - Veterinarian - Agronomist	Primary production - other professionals	Supply chain
	according to UNI EN ISO 19011. - Knowledge of the National Quality System for Animal Welfare.		
Practical training	- Not required for already qualified assessors by the Certification Body to work in the field of primary livestock production.	- Not required for already qualified assessors by the Certification Body to work in the field of primary livestock production.	- Not required for already qualified assessors by the Certification Body to operate in the field of traceability and
	- New assessors with at least one year's work experience are required to support for at least three assessment activities carried out in the context of primary livestock production of the species in question. More activities may be required if deemed necessary. - New assessors who have worked for at least six months are required to undergo a further six-month mentoring period.	- New assessors with at least one year's work experience are required to support for at least three assessment activities carried out in the context of primary livestock production of the species in question. More activities may be required if deemed necessary. - New assessors who have worked for at least six months are	in the chain of custody. - New assessors are required to be shadowed by a qualified assessor for at least three assessment activities carried out in the field of traceability and chain of custody.



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Requirem ents	Primary production: - Veterinarian - Agronomist	Primary production - other professionals	Supply chain
	within the context of primary livestock production for the species in question, with a number of work placements commensurate with training requirements.	required to undergo a further six-month mentoring period. within the context of primary livestock production for the species in question, with a number of work placements commensurate with training requirements.	

A specific circular from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry and the Ministry of Health will provide guidance on the theoretical training of assessors regarding the criteria, content and duration of training courses, as well as the minimum requirements that the bodies and companies delivering such training must meet.

b. Minimum competence requirements for review and decision-making functions:

Requirements	Primary production	Supply chain
Educational qualification	- The same as for assessors.	- The same as for assessors.
Work experience	- The same as for assessors.	- Work experience in traceability.



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Requirements	Primary production	Supply chain
Theoretical training	The same requirements as for assessors, as well as: - A course on audit techniques for compliance assessment according to UNI CEI EN ISO/IEC 17065; - Training on the certification process and the procedures of the Certification Body.	- Knowledge of the ClassyFarm information system and the National Quality System for Animal Welfare. - Training on traceability and the chain of custody.

Part C

Certification Process Requirements

1. Application for membership and review:

- a. the application submitted by Operators to join the SQNBA must contain at least the information referred to in Article 4 of the Decree.

2. Initial certification assessment:

- a. the initial certification assessment must be agreed by the Certification Body with the Operator where the contents of the application have been deemed complete and exhaustive. The initial assessment is aimed at verifying the conformity of each Operator to join the SQNBA certification system. The initial assessment shall always include at least one in situ assessment;
- b. for primary sector Operators, initial assessments must consider all areas of each establishment where animals of the same species, production guideline and rearing method for which membership is requested are bred;
- c. the evaluations carried out by the Food Business Operators must consider all products, processes and production sites involved in the scope of application required for SQNBA certification, including subcontracted activities;
- d. for the certification of a Group of food business operators, the Certification Body must carry out an assessment at the headquarters of the coordinator and group manager and in a sample of Operators that form part of the group equal to at least the sum of $\sqrt{N_i}$, where N_i is the number of subjects who carry out the same activity in the group for producing the product;
- e. The Certification Body, during the initial assessment at:
 - Primary production operators, must:



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- verify that the system for the identification and traceability of animals and products of primary production ensures compliance with the provisions of the SQNBA;
 - ensure that they are capable of meeting the defined SQNBA certification requirements and procedures;
 - verify the effectiveness and reliability of the self-check system implemented.
- Food business operators, must:
- carry out and document the performance of a traceability test;
 - carry out and document the performance of a mass balance;
 - verify the effectiveness and reliability of the self-check system implemented.

3. Initial assessment time:

- a. The Certification Body must establish the rules for calculating the initial assessment times for Operators based on company size and any complexity factors, in accordance with technical provisions to be issued by MASAF, in line with ACCREDIA's opinion.

4. Management of non-compliance:

- a. Any deficiencies found by the Certification Body during the assessment activities must be notified to the Operators concerned as non-compliances. The Certification Body shall classify the non-compliance as Slight or Serious in relation to its importance, nature, systematic nature and the circumstances that led to its occurrence, except in cases where specific indications are provided in the certification schemes of the individual species; in any case, the following definitions apply:
 - *Minor*: partial satisfaction of the SQNBA requirement, a deficiency that does not compromise the conformity of the breeding and production process, and/or the self-control system, and/or the management of company documentation and/or the requirements for the identification and traceability of animals and products; characterised by having no prolonged effects over time and not causing substantial changes in the company's status and/or the compliance of animals and products and/or the reliability of certified entities;
 - *Serious*: failure to meet the SQNBA requirement, a substantial deficiency that compromises the compliance of the breeding and production process and/or the self-control system, and/or the management of company documentation and/or the identification and traceability requirements for animals and products, and/or the loss of the requirements for access to the SQNBA; characterised by prolonged effects such as to cause substantial changes in the status of the company and/or the compliance of animals and products, and/or the reliability of certified entities.



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- b. The description and classification of non-compliances shall be notified to the Operators concerned following review and a decision by Certification Body staff. The Operator to whom a non-compliance has been notified must define, in agreement with the Body, the actions and timing for the resolution thereof, as well as actions to prevent its recurrence. The CB must define the ways (documentary and/or in situ) and the timing with which it intends to verify that compliance has been restored. In the case of group certification, the actions identified to resolve the non-compliant situation must be extended by all members of the group carrying out the same activity.
- c. During the initial assessment stage, all serious non-compliances must be closed with verification of the effectiveness of the proposed actions before the certificate is issued and before subsequently being included in the certification system.
- d. Any non-compliance with current legislation, detected during animal welfare assessment activities, must be communicated to the Local Veterinary Service in accordance with the procedures defined by the Ministry for Health.

5. Review and decision on certification:

- a. The review and decision must be made by staff who were not involved in the assessment process.
- b. The review and decision may be carried out by a Committee, comprising one or more persons, who meet the same competence requirements as those established for the assessor. In the case of certification in the primary sector, the Committee must ensure the presence of a veterinary surgeon whose vote is binding to proceed with the certification process.

6. Certificate of conformity:

- a. The certificate of conformity is issued to the primary production Operator, food business Operator or group of food business Operators following the positive outcome of the initial assessment.
- b. The certificate shall include the following information:
 - for Primary production operators:
 - the company name of the Primary sector operator, or of the cooperative or other recognised forms of association,
 - the Unique Registration Number of the Operator responsible for the establishment; in the case of cooperatives or other recognised forms of association, the same data are required for each member Operator.
 - for Food business operators:



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- the name of the Food business operator and the natural or legal person coordinating the group;
- the VAT number or tax code;
- the initial date of the certification decision, the date of the current issue of the certificate, following changes made;
- the reference to the certification standard;
- the name, address and logo of the Certification Body; other marks (e.g. the accreditation symbol) may be used provided they are not misleading or ambiguous;
- the unique identification code of the SQNBA Certified Operator, established by the Certification Body;
- the scope of the certification, distinguishing:
 - for Primary production operators:
 - o references to the animal species reared and, where applicable,
 - o the production guideline, the method of rearing, the breeding phase;
 - o any direct sales in the farm of products of animal origin;
 - for Food business operators: references to the activity (products, services) subject to certification, the animal species, the processing.
- c. All activities carried out by a group for the production of SQNBA certified products, including those involved in subcontracting activities, must be included in the certificate of conformity, together with a list of the group's members.

7. Maintenance assessment

- a. The Certification Body certifies the maintenance of compliance by the Operators included in the system by carrying out assessments, including unannounced ones, as described below:
 - Primary production operators: at least one annual verification and, if grouped in cooperatives or other recognised associative forms, at least one annual verification at the premises of the group manager (associative form) and a sample of Operators who are members of the group equal to $\sqrt{N}$, where N is the number of Operators determined once a year according to the actual number of members.

In the case of an associative form, the manager must ensure that the group complies with SQNBA requirements by carrying out verifications on all member operators at least once a year, on the basis of the self-check system implemented during membership.



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The CB's verifications must always take into account all the areas of each establishment where animals of the same species, production guideline and rearing method for which membership has been requested are reared, as well as take into account the data contained in the information system referred to in Article 9 of the Decree;

- Food business operators: at least one annual verification and, if organised as a group, at least one annual verification at the premises of the manager and a sample of Operators belonging to the group equal to at least 60% of the subjects determined during the initial assessment and not previously assessed, for the first maintenance assessment. From the second assessment, the number of subjects to be checked must be determined once a year, depending on the actual number of participants and must be at least the sum of the $\sqrt{N_i}$, where N_i is the number of subjects carrying out the same activity in the group for the production of the product.

8. Assessment times for maintaining certification

- a. The Certification Body must establish rules for calculating assessment times for maintaining certification with Operators, based on company size and any complexity factors, in accordance with technical provisions to be issued by MASAF, in accordance with ACCREDIA's opinion.

9. Non-Conformance Management

- a. The Certification Body must have prepared a procedure for the management of references to certification on non-compliant products placed on the market, following serious non-compliances.
- b. The Certification Body, upon the third notification of a slight Non-Compliance related to the same requirement within a 12-month period, shall classify it as serious. In cases of serious non-compliance, the animal and/or products not complying with the requirements of the SQNBA shall not include references to certification in the sales documents, labelling and advertising of the certified animal or product of animal origin, including those placed on the market. Where serious non-compliances are related to the whole farming or production system, or if the appropriate identification and traceability systems are not maintained, the deletion of the references to certification should be extended to all the animals in the establishment and to the farm products present at the time of the finding.
- c. The Certification Body must define the procedures for carrying out the additional checks on Operators who have been notified of a serious non-compliance in order to attest to the correct implementation of the treatments and corrective actions and the conformity of the entire farming and production system. The third notification of a serious Non-Compliance relating to the same requirement within a 12-month period must provide for the issuance of a measure suspending the certification.



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10. Suspension and revocation of certification

- a. The Certification Body shall suspend certification for a maximum of 6 months whenever:
 - there are general and repeated deficiencies in the system of self-checks that may compromise the reliability and effectiveness of the system;
 - the causes that led to the issuance of a Serious Non-Compliance are not resolved within the prescribed time limits;
 - the Certification Body is prevented from accessing the facilities to carry out the assessment, without justification.
- b. During the suspension period, the Operator is obliged to continue to apply the provisions of the certification procedure without prejudice to the prohibition to sell the animals and market the products with indications referring to the SQNBA in sales documents, labelling and advertising, and must define how to communicate to customers the removal of certification references from their products, including those already placed on the market.
- c. At the end of the suspension period, in accordance with the certification procedure, the Certification Body must assess, if all certification requirements have been satisfied, how compliance can be restored.
- d. In the absence of the restoration of the suspended Operator's compliance within the deadlines agreed with the Certification Body, and in the event of failure to implement the correct procedure during the suspension period, the Certification Body shall apply a measure revoking the certification, resulting in the exclusion of the Operator from the SQNBA system.
- e. The measures adopted by the Certification Body must be communicated to the Operators concerned within 14 working days of the evaluation and the information relating to the measure must be uploaded to the IT system referred to in Article 9 of the Decree within the same time frame.
- f. In the event of revocation, the Operator may submit a new application for SQNBA membership, provided that at least six months have elapsed from the date of the measure and provided that it has resolved the causes that led to the issuance of such a measure.

11. Handling of complaints and appeals

- a. The Certification Body defines the procedures for managing (timing, procedures and costs) complaints and appeals against decisions taken during the certification process.



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Annex 2

Requirements for food business operators

All food business operators, with the exception of primary production operators who sell SQNBA-certified products directly on their premises, who handle or label food products using SQNBA references, must be certified in accordance with the SQNBA Chain of Custody by a Certification Body registered in the list kept by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, as provided for in Article 5 of the Decree.

The purpose of the Chain of Custody, hereinafter CoC, is to provide assurance on the origin of raw materials or products that can be labelled with references to the SQNBA, from certified holdings.

The CoC must be applied throughout the production chain until it is sold to the final consumer and the non-inclusion of an entity in the supply chain makes it impossible to use the references to the SQNBA and the sale of the product as a certificate.

a) General requirements

The Food Operator shall submit an application for certification for the SQNBA CoC to a Certification Body following the implementation of an in-company identification and traceability system, adapted to the size, type and complexity of the activities carried out, attesting to:

- its position and role in the production chain;
- foodstuffs included in the SQNBA CoC;
- the list of food business operators involved in the production (for the stages of supply, processing, trade and distribution), including for processing carried out on behalf of third parties;
- how products are managed in order to ensure proper separation, identification and traceability to prevent possible mixing with products that do not comply with the requirements of the SQNBA. In the processing stages of SQNBA-certified products, the food business operator shall demonstrate the identified methods for separating processes at each individual processing stage and during storage.

Food business operators may apply for group certification; operators belonging to the group carry out successive and consecutive stages in the production of the product, or carry out the same activity. Where group certification is required, a natural or legal person must be designated to coordinate the activities of the entire group and verify the effectiveness of the CoC system for all members. In such cases, provision must be made for an agreement between the Parties identifying their responsibilities and tasks, requiring express willingness of the members to submit to the Organisation's controls.

b) Supply chain management



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Each food business operator shall identify suppliers holding a valid individual or group certificate against the SQNBA CoC for the products of interest. In addition, a method must be defined to verify the correspondence of the incoming material with that actually purchased. Sales documents or accompanying documents for certified products must always include references to the certification.

c) Responsibilities of plant management

The management of the food establishment must be involved and it must document its commitment to implement and maintain chain of custody requirements in accordance with the SQNBA.

d) Non-Conformance Management

The food business operator must document the management of non-compliance detected during the activities related to the production and marketing of SQNBA products. The documentation must include actions to be taken as a result of non-compliant results derived from self-checking assessments or by the Certification Bodies.

The food business operator shall establish a procedure to ensure and document that non-compliant products are identified, segregated and supervised in order to prevent them from being traded or marketed as SQNBA products. The procedure must also define how to inform other Operators affected by the non-compliance and determine actions to remove references to certification on products destined for the final consumer.

e) Corrective actions

The Food Operator must document the procedures for recording, implementing and the outcome of corrective actions following non-compliance, identifying the type of intervention, the responsibilities for carrying out the operation, the timing, and the verification of effectiveness:

f) Complaints management

The food business operator shall provide evidence of the registration and handling of complaints.

g) Documentation and Records Management

The documentation of the CoC system shall include at least:

- documents attesting the supply of incoming products and sales of finished products intended to be marketed with references to the SQNBA;
- the documents and records attesting to the activities and flows of the production process and the results of the checks and verifications carried out;
- the documents and records necessary for the proper implementation and monitoring of the CoC.

In the case of group certification, the documentation shall also include a description of the production chain, the responsibilities and the methods of management and verification of the



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processes and products managed by the Group Operators, and of the subcontracted activities. In addition, it is necessary to enter into an agreement with the entities entrusted with subcontracting activities in order to define the supply criteria and responsibilities.

The food business Operator must indicate the responsibilities for issuing, reviewing and approving the documents of the CoC system, the site where they are stored, those who can access and how they can be managed and stored.

All documents and records must be updated, stored, traceable and archived for a minimum time equal to the lifespan of the product plus one year.

h) Education and training

The food business operators should appropriately train, instruct, raise awareness among and involve staff who may have an influence on the CoC, in order to ensure the proper implementation of the system. Staff must be made aware of the importance of their function and the consequences of their behaviour.

i) Internal audit and review

Each food business operator or Group of Food Business Operators shall reassess the effectiveness of its CoC system at least every 12 months in order to monitor and improve its effectiveness. This assessment shall include the recording of mass balances and traceability tests.

In the case of group certification, the internal audit shall be carried out by the Responsible Organisation on all members of the group.

The assessment of the CoC and any documentary updates must be carried out whenever changes in production flows occur, or new products are included, or in view of the results of internal inspections, self-checks, any complaints received and non-compliance detected by the Certification Body.

l) Use of other supply chain traceability certifications

For the purpose of communicating the certified origin in light of the SQNBA of products or raw materials, any other product traceability certifications held by the Operator will not be considered equivalent.



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Annex 3

Specifications setting out the requirements for certification under the National Quality System for Animal Welfare (SQNBA) for free-range fattening pigs (over 50 kg) and cattle:

- Regulations governing certification requirements for fattening pigs (over 50 kg) raised outdoors (Annex 3.1);
- Regulations governing certification requirements for dairy cattle kept in stalls (Annex 3.2);
- Regulations on the welfare of beef cattle kept in stables (Annex 3.3);
- Guidelines on animal welfare for cattle on small-scale farms (Annex 3.4);
- Regulations on animal welfare for cattle reared with either exclusively or predominantly on pasture (Annex 3.5).



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Annex 3.1

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GENERAL PART

1. Foreword

Primary production operators and all personnel involved in the management and care of animals and livestock facilities must be aware of the complex relationships among animal health, human health, and the environment, and that welfare can only be achieved through careful integration of these components and the various factors that constitute them.

Therefore, welfare must be achieved and maintained by allowing the animal to maximise its ability to adapt to the environment and by reducing stressors through effective farm management, prophylaxis, biosecurity, and livestock facility enhancement programmes. An appropriate level of animal welfare on the farm also means a lower incidence of disease.

The reduction and rationalisation of antimicrobial consumption, integrated with veterinary activities and advice, are direct consequences of optimal managerial/structural management and represent one of the main tools for containing the spread of antimicrobial resistance in animals, the environment, and food, with a view to *One Health*.

2. Area of application



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The requirements set out below apply to all pig farms, starting at 50 kg live weight and, in any case, for a continuous period of not less than the last 4 months of life, reared in outdoor fattening conditions.

3. Definitions

- **Outdoor fattening facility:** in the context of pig farming, this refers to a method of permanent outdoor rearing in which pigs are reared predominantly outdoors on areas of land enclosed by fencing suitable for preventing contact with wild pigs, where the pigs have access to areas equipped for drinking, feeding and resting.
- **Primary production operator:** this refers to the farmer, as defined in Article 2 of Annex A to this decree.
- **Employee:** a person who works at the facility on a full-time or part-time basis (minimum half-day) to carry out daily feeding and care of animals and environments, excluding those who work exclusively in the fields.
- **Facility:** refers to the farm.

4. Membership of the SQNBA

In order to join the SQNBA, primary production operators must submit a specific application to a Certification Body listed on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests (MASAF) and must meet, amongst other things, the following access requirements, in accordance with Article 4(5), point 5.1. 3. of Annex A to this decree:

- absence of pigs with docked tails (10% tolerance);
- compliance with legislative requirements, i.e. the absence of open non-conformities, as per the latest official public health inspection for the sectors relating to animal welfare, pharmacosurveillance and biosecurity, when available;
- compliance with legislative requirements in the last self-assessment carried out in the previous 12 months.

The verification of the prerequisites carried out by the Certification Body is recorded in the dedicated section of the 'ClassyFarm' risk-based farm categorisation information system, as referred to in Article 9 of Annex A to this decree, by consulting the access traffic light system on the specific 'Certification Page' for each individual primary production operator.

A green traffic light indicates that the access requirements have been met and allows the Operator to proceed with the certification process. Conversely, a red traffic light blocks the certification process as it indicates that the access requirements have not been met.

5. Assessment requirements

The multifactorial nature of wellbeing must necessarily integrate three MACRO AREAS relating to:

- **MACRO-AREA 'BA', ANIMAL WELFARE:** includes the presence of suitable facilities (*Facilities Area*), conscious farm management (*Management Area*) and attention to animal



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conditions through the monitoring of direct welfare indicators (*Direct Animal Measures Area - ABMs*).

- **MACRO-AREA 'BS', BIOSAFETY:** based on the control of farm biosafety. Biosecurity is one of the main prevention tools available to primary production operators to prevent the introduction, development and spread of diseases in animals on the farm. A suitable biosecurity plan must be developed in consultation with the veterinary surgeon.
- **MACRO-AREA 'MV', CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES:** Conscious use of medication, with particular attention to antimicrobial treatments. Primary production operators who are aware of the integrated approach to achieving a high level of animal welfare on farms use veterinary medicines responsibly and in consultation with veterinarians to ensure appropriate therapeutic support for animals and combat antibiotic resistance.

To obtain certification, primary production operators who meet the prerequisites for access to SQNBA must satisfy the certification requirements for the MACRO AREAS Animal Welfare (BA) and Biosafety (BS), as well as those set out in the MACRO-AREA Conscious Use of Veterinary Medicines (MV).

6. Labelling requirements

Information relating to the rearing method, as provided for in Article 8(1)(b) of Annex A to this decree, must be indicated, depending on the rearing system adopted, as follows: ***Outdoor farming.***

➤ ANIMAL WELFARE MACRO-AREA (BA)

• STRUCTURE AREA

1. Infirmary area - Treatment of sick or injured animals - Slaughter of animals

The farm must implement an effective system for identifying animals that are suffering, sick or injured, and determine in which cases isolation, including preventive isolation, is necessary for their treatment. The shelter area, called the infirmary, must be adapted to the condition of the animal requiring assistance. The presence of a dedicated, enclosed infirmary area, marked with appropriate signage or other written indications and documented on the farm layout plan, is assessed. In the event of animal slaughter, the presence of a documented procedure specifying the methods, the personnel performing the operations, and the equipment used, including its maintenance, shall be assessed. Access to the infirmary is only granted to animals whose clinical condition requires specific treatment; otherwise, it must remain empty. An assessment is made of whether the infirmary has comfortable, dry, and clean bedding (straw or similar materials) and/or mats (made of soft rubber), as required by the clinical condition.

Infirmary
Identified room, specially prepared to accommodate sick or injured animals with dry bedding and/or comfortable mats where required by clinical condition.
Euthanasia of animals



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Infirmary

Existence of written procedures and training of personnel

2. Animal density

Animals must have sufficient free space to meet their physiological needs.

Animal density: free space

The minimum housing area for pigs weighing over 50 kg in outdoor rearing systems is at least 250 m² per animal, subject to the provisions of current environmental protection legislation.

In the case of shelter, the minimum covered housing areas for the different categories of pigs are as follows:

- > 0.55 m² per animal from 51 to 85 kg;
- > 0.65 m² per animal from 86 to 110 kg;
- > 1 m² per animal over 110 kg.

3. Shelter and resting area

Animals must have access to a sheltered resting area that adequately protects them from adverse weather conditions and health risks, and is appropriate for the season and location.

Sheltered resting area

Presence of both natural shelters (trees, ravines, caves, etc.) and artificial shelters (roofs, shelters, etc.) appropriate to the season and location, protecting from adverse weather conditions and/or environmental hazards.

Both natural and artificial shelters must be easily accessible to all animals and capable of simultaneously protecting all pigs on the same farm.

4. Microclimate conditions check

Animals must have access to shelters that guarantee their welfare even in adverse weather conditions.

Microclimate conditions check

Natural or artificial ventilation; cooling (e.g. water pools, cooling devices such as sprinklers, showers, or drippers, or shade cloths for heat); shelters for cold weather.

• ANIMAL MEASUREMENT AREA (ABMS)

5. Underweight animals

Assessing the body condition of animals is a tool for monitoring their health and welfare. Underweight animals can have multiple causes and, when found, must be investigated as a



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manifestation of a hidden, indirect problem, such as the inability to feed properly, competition for food/or the presence of disease.

The *Body Condition Score (BCS)* is measured on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a very thin (cachectic) animal and 5 a very fat (obese) animal.

Underweight animals-
Existence of a monitoring plan for animals classified as underweight according to the <i>Body Condition Score (BCS)</i> . The number of animals with a $BCS < 2$ must be less than 7% of the total number of animals. If it exceeds 4%, the farmer is expected to analyse the causes and risk factors and identify and implement appropriate corrective actions. Any underweight animals (with insufficient BCS) are housed in the infirmary or in a separate area.

➤ BIOSAFETY MACRO-AREA (BS)

The Decree of the Ministry of Health, in agreement with the Ministries of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry, and Ecological Transition, dated 28 June 2022, entitled 'Biosecurity requirements for establishments keeping pigs', establishes comprehensive and high-level conditions.

Given the above, it is considered sufficient to supplement the requirements set out below.

1. Danish customs

The Danish concept of customs is inherent in a series of practices adopted to ensure proper access to the 'clean zone' of the farm in order to minimise the risk of contact from the 'dirty zone' of the farm and from outside.

Danish customs
Based on the risk analysis of the establishment, the Operator has identified and documented the characteristics of the Danish customs and the procedures for correct implementation and maintenance.
Isolation and quarantine
In the event of new pigs being introduced, an isolation area must be identified for their control and observation. This area must be suitably separated from the rest of the farm, both structurally and functionally.

➤ MACRO-AREA CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES (MV)

Any non-compliance with the requirements for this macro-area must be classified as serious unless it can be proven that it was used to safeguard the animal's health and life. In this case, references to



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certification must be deleted only for the animal or group of animals treated, appropriately identified.

1. Consumption of the veterinary medicinal product

DDD values (*)

The consumption of antibiotics on farms during the observation period provided for in paragraph 2 bis of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022, laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, expressed in DDD by ClassyFarm, must fall within one of the following conditions with respect to the national distribution of veterinary medicine consumption:

- a) the Defined Daily Dose (DDD) values are maintained or fall within the threshold value reported, in the first instance, in Annex XI of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022 laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021, as amended and supplemented, with regard to direct payments for pigs intended for fattening;
- b) DDD values remain above the threshold mentioned, but are 10% lower than in 2022.

(*) Any amendments to the national threshold, the reduction percentage referred to in point (b) and the reference year may be made by decree of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.

2. Prescriptions and company health monitoring

Antibiotic treatments

The Operator provides evidence of having administered antibiotic treatments only following a veterinary prescription issued as a result of company health monitoring, which involves assessing the sensitivity or resistance of company pathogens to antibiotic active ingredients through antibiotic sensitivity tests. Health monitoring is considered valid for multiple treatments, provided it is carried out at least once a year.



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3. Sensitivity testing for antibiotic use

Use of specific veterinary medicinal products

In the event that antibiotics belonging to the Fluoroquinolone and third- and fourth-generation Cephalosporin classes are used, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests, indicating that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

Where antimicrobials belonging to the **polymyxin** class (**colistin**) are used, the operator shall provide documented evidence, through annual health monitoring, that the treatment was carried out only in accordance with the recommendations provided by **in vitro susceptibility testing**.



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Annex 3.2

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➤ GENERAL PART

1. Foreword

Primary production operators and all personnel involved in the management and care of animals and livestock facilities must be aware of the complex relationships between animal health, human health, and the environment, and that welfare can only be achieved through careful integration of these components and the various factors that constitute them.

Therefore, welfare must be achieved and maintained by allowing the animal to maximise its ability to adapt to the environment and by reducing stressors through effective farm management, prophylaxis, biosecurity, and livestock facility enhancement programmes. An appropriate level of animal welfare on the farm also means a lower incidence of disease.

The reduction and rationalisation of antimicrobial consumption, integrated with veterinary activities and advice, are direct consequences of optimal managerial/structural management and represent one of the main tools for containing the spread of antimicrobial resistance in animals, the environment, and food, with a view to *One Health*.

2. Area of application

The farms are structured for the rearing of cattle for milk production. Within this type of farm, different groups of animals will be evaluated:

- calves (both male and female) from birth to 6 months of age,
- young 'unproductive' animals, such as heifers aged between 6 months and their first calving,
- cows 'in production', such as dry cows, cows in the peripartum period and lactating cows.

The requirements set out below apply to all dairy cattle farms with more than 50 head of cattle, increased to 90 head for farms located in mountain areas, where all animals are kept in free-range housing for 365 days a year with a stable housing system without recourse to grazing:

- free-range on litter,
- free-range housing in cubicles.

3. Definitions

- **Employee:** a person who works in the establishment on a full-time or part-time basis (minimum half-day) to carry out daily feeding and care of the animals and the environment, excluding those who work exclusively in the fields and in the milking parlour.
- **Dairy cattle:** females reared for the production of milk intended for human consumption.
- **Veal:** bovine animal (female or male) from birth to 6 months of age.
- **Heifer:** bovine over 6 months of age that has not yet calved.



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- **Lactating cow:** a cow that produces milk after giving birth.
- **Dry cow:** a cow that has finished lactation.
- **Primary production operator:** as defined in Article 2 of Annex A to this decree.

4. Membership of the SQNBA

In order to join the SQNBA, primary production operators must submit a specific application to a Certification Body listed on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests (MASAF) and must meet, amongst other things, the following access requirements, in accordance with Article 4(5), point 5.1.3. of Annex A to this decree:

- compliance with legislative requirements, i.e. the absence of open non-conformities, as per the latest official public health inspection for the sectors relating to animal welfare, pharmacosurveillance and biosecurity, when available;
- compliance with legislative requirements in the last self-assessment carried out in the previous 12 months.

The Certification Body carries out verification of compliance with the prerequisites in the dedicated section of the 'ClassyFarm' risk-based farm categorisation information system referred to in Article 9 of Annex A to this decree. This involves consulting the access traffic light system on the 'Certification Page' for each primary production operator.

A green traffic light indicates that the access prerequisites have been met and allows the Operator to proceed with the certification process. Conversely, a red traffic light blocks the continuation of the certification process, indicating that the access prerequisites have not been met.

5. Assessment requirements

Primary production operators who meet the SQNBA access requirements must satisfy the certification requirements of these Specifications for the four MACRO-AREAS listed below to obtain certification.

The multifactorial nature of wellbeing must necessarily integrate the MACRO-AREAS relating to:

- **MACRO-AREA 'BA', ANIMAL WELFARE:** includes the presence of suitable facilities (Facilities Area), conscious farm management (Management Area) and attention to animal conditions through the monitoring of direct welfare indicators (Direct Animal Measures Area - ABMs).
- **MACRO-AREA 'BS', BIOSAFETY:** based on the control of farm biosafety. Biosecurity is one of the main prevention tools available to primary production operators to prevent the introduction, development and spread of diseases in animals on the farm. A suitable biosecurity plan must be developed in consultation with the veterinary surgeon.
- **MACRO-AREA 'MV', RESPONSIBLE USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINAL PRODUCTS:** responsible use of medicines, with particular attention to antimicrobial treatments. Primary production operators who are aware of the integrated approach to achieving



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a high level of animal welfare on farms use veterinary medicines responsibly and in consultation with veterinarians to ensure appropriate therapeutic support for animals and combat antibiotic resistance.

- **MACRO-AREA 'AM', ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:** conscious water management. Since human health, animal health, and the environment are closely linked, it is considered necessary to also understand the broader environmental context through the *One Health* approach.

6. Labelling requirements

The information relating to the rearing method, as provided for in Article 8(1)(b) of Annex A to this decree, must be stated, depending on the rearing system adopted, as: ***free-range rearing system***.

Where products from free-range farms that do not use grazing are marketed alongside products from farms that follow other SQNBA production codes for cattle, the label must not include the information relating to point (b) 'Rearing method' as set out in Article 8(1) of Annex A to this decree.

➤ ANIMAL WELFARE MACRO-AREA (BA)

MANAGEMENT AREA

1. Number of employees

The number of staff must be appropriate for the number of animals present on the premises to ensure proper control of their health and welfare.

When counting, the following should be taken into account:

- Those who work full-time should be counted as one person,
- those who work half-days should be counted as 0.5.

Number of employees

Optimal number of staff caring for animals:

- At least one Operator for every 80 animals (if the same person also performs milking operations)
- at least one Operator for every 200 animals (if the same person does not perform milking)

STRUCTURE AREA

2. Size and operation of drinking troughs

There must be an appropriate number of drinking troughs for the animals present and for the farm's capacity. In particular, the location of the drinking troughs must facilitate water intake by all animals in the different areas of the farm.

Lactating cattle



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At least one drinking trough for every 10 animals; in the case of troughs, 6-7 cm per animal and located in different areas.

3. Number of places available in the feeding trough

Equipment and areas used for feeding cattle must be appropriately sized and constructed of suitable materials to ensure easy access and the ability to ingest the amount of feed necessary for their needs.

Check how many animals can access the feeding trough simultaneously.

Lactating cattle - dry cows - heifers

Each animal requires at least 68 linear centimetres of space (50 linear centimetres for heifers).

Access to feed must comply with the following conditions:

- for split rations (**non-unifeed**): 100% of the animals can feed at the same time;
- for **unifeed** rations: more than 70% of animals can feed simultaneously.

4. Freedom of movement for animals

The animal housing area must be correctly sized to ensure maximum comfort and hygiene, and must not cause unnecessary suffering or injury.

In particular, animals must have access to a covered area that is accessible and usable by each bovine animal, allowing them to lie down and move around normally without impediment.

When calculating the available lying area, it must be taken into account that, for adult cattle, when the lying and feeding areas coincide, the feeding access area must be excluded for 1.5 m (1 m for heifers).



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Lactating, dry and peripartum cattle
Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area, with permanent bedding, of more than 6 m ² per animal or by a number of usable cubicles exceeding 90% of the number of animals present.
Heifers
Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area, covered with permanent bedding, of more than 3.5 m ² per animal or by a number of usable cubicles exceeding 90% of the number of animals present.
Calves from 8 weeks to 6 months old
Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area greater than: • 1.70 m² per animal for animals with a live weight of less than 150 kg; • 1.90 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 150 and 220 kg; • 2.00 m² per animal for animals with a live weight exceeding 220 kg Furthermore, animals must not be tethered at any time, including during feeding.
Calves aged between 3 and 8 weeks (*)
Calves must be reared in pairs or groups. The pen housing 2 calves has a minimum size of 1 m ² per animal. For larger numbers, the area per animal (1 m ²) must be multiplied by the number of calves present, with a minimum length of 130 cm for the shortest side of the enclosure.

(*) The requirement ‘**Calves aged between 3 and 8 weeks**’ is to be applied 24 months after the publication of the specification.

5. Pavement

Cattle hooves are a key factor in ensuring animal welfare, and walking areas must be suitable for preserving their integrity. Flooring refers to the walkable surfaces used by cows in production in the various areas of the establishment (e.g. feeding lanes, corridors, passageways, access points, exercise areas, etc.). The materials used for the design and construction of floors must be of appropriate quality. They must be chosen in accordance with the category of animal being reared, so that they are neither too slippery nor too abrasive.

The flooring must be rough over the entire surface available to the animals to prevent slipping while they move, run, stand, lie down, or engage in social behaviour. It must be safe and free of obstacles to prevent injury.

Particular attention must also be paid to outdoor access.

Lactating and dry cows
The flooring (solid or slatted) must be suitable and rough on all surfaces where cattle walk, or there must be bedding made of suitable organic material, i.e. abundant, non-abrasive, well-preserved and absorbent.



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Heifers

The flooring (solid or slatted) must be suitable and rough (e.g. due to the presence of suitable grooves, rubber coating or a small amount of bedding) for most of the surfaces on which the animals walk.

6. Nutrition

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- 2.
- 3.
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- 5.
- 6.

6.1 Management of feed and daily rations

Food systems should enable every individual to meet their needs in terms of food quantity and quality.

Cattle over 6 months of age

Presence of a suitable ration for the animals, specific for each basic group (heifers, dry cows, lactating cows) and composed of healthy feed.

6.2 Type of feeding

Feed should also be provided ad libitum to ensure that each animal can feed in accordance with its needs throughout the 24 hours. In split feeding, feed should be available almost continuously over a 24-hour period, including both fibre and concentrate (the latter must be administered at least twice).

Cattle over 6 months of age

Animals must have access to feed at appropriate intervals, guaranteed 24 hours a day and divided correctly (concentrates administered at least twice).

7. Inspection and control of adult animals and calves

Daily inspections, either in person or via remote monitoring systems, are intended to supplement food distribution and daily management activities and involve observing all adult cattle and any calves housed in stables, with subsequent recording of their condition.

The inspection covers all groups of animals on the farm, divided into adult animals and calves. Highly specialised activities or those relating to the performance of specific tasks (e.g., milking



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with specific tasks assigned, feed distribution, preparation of the unifeed wagon, etc.) are not considered daily inspections. Any observations made (e.g. health, behaviour, etc.) must be recorded.

Cattle over 6 months of age
Animals must be inspected at least twice or more per day, and observations must be recorded.
Calves up to 6 months of age
Animals must be inspected at least twice a day, and observations must be recorded.

8. Infirmary area

The establishment must implement an effective system for identifying animals that are suffering, sick or injured, and determine in which cases isolation, including preventive isolation, is necessary for their treatment. The recovery area, known as the infirmary, must be adapted to the condition of the animal requiring care.

Only animals with clearly identified pathologies should be present in the infirmary, and they must have access to food and fresh water ad libitum.

Infirmary
Presence of a specially prepared and identified room to accommodate sick or injured animals

ANIMAL MEASUREMENT AREA (ABMS)

9. Annual mortality of adult animals

This requirement applies only to farms with more than 50 animals, increased to 90 animals for farms located in mountainous areas. The data to be collected and recorded must take into account adult cows (over 6 months of age), whether lactating or dry, that have died spontaneously on the farm, been euthanised, or emergency slaughtered (MSU) in the last 12 months, compared to the number of adult cows (lactating and dry) present on the day of assessment.

Lactating and dry cattle
Mortality must be less than 5%.

10. Udder health

Mastitis in dairy cattle is a multifactorial condition that has significant consequences for animal welfare.

One method for assessing udder health and monitoring herd infection prevalence is to measure somatic cell count in bulk milk.



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Maintaining low somatic cell counts in bulk milk is desirable, as they are indicators of the health and welfare of dairy cows, and is achieved through a combination of good management practices, control of mastitis-causing bacteria, and, above all, good hygiene and milking management.

Udder health

Moving geometric mean of somatic cells in milk less than 300,000 cells/ml, calculated over 3 months, with at least one sample taken per month

11. Hygiene and cleanliness

All surfaces used for lying down and walking, such as paddocks, floors, corridors and passageways, whether used to house young and unproductive animals or adult animals, must be kept clean, dry and hygienically adequate to avoid health problems and/or disturbance in the movements and behaviour of cattle. In addition, the facilities and surfaces available should ensure easy and safe access for staff to facilitate regular cleaning and access to bedding.

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11.1 Floors and walking areas are not used for lying down

The assessment must consider hygiene, cleanliness, and floor management at the time of the farm visit, as well as the conditions in which the majority of the animals live.

Corridors, passageways and exercise areas must be taken into account.

Lactating cattle, dry cattle and heifers

The environments must be reasonably clean and sufficiently managed in almost all groups.

11.2 Housing environments and bedding

The hygiene of equipment and milking operations is of considerable importance, both for the health and welfare of animals and for the hygiene and health of milk, with obvious repercussions on public health.

To ensure appropriate conditions, it is necessary to consider hygiene, cleanliness, and the management of housing environments, flooring, and bedding (cubicles, stalls, or permanent bedding), as well as the frequency of restoration and replacement of materials.

Calves, heifers, lactating cows, dry cows, peripartum cows

Housing and/or bedding areas must be reasonably clean, dry and appropriately managed through the



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Calves, heifers, lactating cows, dry cows, peripartum cows

appropriate replacement of bedding material, which must prevail over faecal material. When it comes to grates, they must be clean and free from faecal matter on as much of the available surface area as possible.

11.3 Milking rooms and equipment

Assess the general hygiene of premises and milking equipment (e.g. milking parlour) without confusing this with their technological level. If a milking robot is present, assess the environment's hygiene and the robot's hygiene.

Lactating cattle

Assess whether the milking units are appropriately cleaned, even if there is faeces on the floors and walls.

12. Environmental conditions

12.

12.1 Temperature and humidity

The thermal insulation of the structure, heating and ventilation must be capable of protecting the animals from heat and cold and at the same time ensuring good air quality, allowing air circulation, dust levels, temperature, relative humidity and gas concentrations (carbon dioxide, ammonia, etc.) to be kept within limits that are not harmful to the animals.

Dairy cattle stables can vary greatly, so the appropriate conditions must be assessed according to the type of stable and the cooling equipment available.

All groups

Presence of microclimatic conditions suitable for animals: e.g. natural ventilation (e.g. open stable) or suitable ventilation/aeration systems without automatic control systems, and, for calves, the possibility of protecting animals from heat and cold depending on weather conditions (e.g. insulation of cages, shade or windbreak tarpaulins, etc.).

12.2 Illuminance

Cattle need natural lighting or lighting programmes that respect the circadian rhythm of the day to orient themselves in their housing environments, engage in normal behaviour and social contact, and satisfy their physiological needs.



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All groups

Animals housed without access to natural light must have an uninterrupted period of light of at least 8 hours (with a minimum intensity of at least 40 lux) and an uninterrupted period of darkness (or dim night lighting) of at least 8 hours.

➤ BIOSAFETY MACRO-AREA (BS)

The biosecurity plan can be entrusted to a specialised company or managed internally, with your vet's agreement. The plan must include product specifications, safety data sheets, bait monitoring and follow-up actions with treatment records. In addition, orderly warehouse management and orderly removal of dirt are required.

1. Rodent and insect control

The presence of rodents and insects (flies, parasites) is a major source of risk for the introduction and spread of infectious pathogens within the farm, and therefore, their spread must be controlled.

Biosafety plan

Presence of defined and organic procedures, written in a biosecurity plan and implemented.

2. Water control

The quality of water intended for animals is essential to maintaining homeostasis of physiological and metabolic functions and to preventing damage to equipment and facilities. In addition, poor microbiological quality of drinking water could pose a risk to animal health and, consequently, to consumers.

Control of water not supplied by the public water supply

To ensure good drinking water quality, it is necessary to check the farm's water sources once a year through bacteriological analysis of the following parameters: *E. coli*, Enterococci, Total bacterial count.

3. Visitor access

All visitors entering the farm, including regular visitors and those entering for work reasons, may represent a vehicle for contamination; therefore, access must be managed.

Veterinarians, business consultants, and others are also considered visitors.

Visitor access

All visitors are required to wear disposable shoe covers before entering the premises, or they must wear boots that they leave at the company for their exclusive personal use.



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➤ MACRO-AREA CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES (MV)

Any non-compliance with the requirements for this macro-area must be classified as serious unless it can be proven that it was used to safeguard the animal's health and life. In this case, references to certification must be deleted only for the animal or group of animals treated, appropriately identified.

1. Consumption of the veterinary medicinal product

DDD values (*)

The consumption of antibiotics on farms during the observation period provided for in paragraph 2 bis of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022, laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, expressed in DDD by ClassyFarm, must fall within one of the following conditions with respect to the national distribution of veterinary medicine consumption:

- a) the Defined Daily Dose (DDD) values are maintained or fall within the threshold value reported, in the first instance, in Annex XI of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022 laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, as regards direct payments for dairy cattle;
- b) DDD values remain above the threshold mentioned, but are 10% lower than in 2022.

(*) Any amendments to the national threshold, the reduction percentage referred to in point (b) and the reference year may be made by decree of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.

2. Prescriptions and company health monitoring

Antibiotic treatments

The Operator provides evidence of having administered antibiotic treatments only following a veterinary prescription issued as a result of company health monitoring, which involves assessing the sensitivity or resistance of company pathogens to antibiotic active ingredients through antibiotic sensitivity tests. Health monitoring is considered valid for multiple treatments, provided it is carried out at least once a year.

3. Sensitivity testing for antibiotic use

Use of antibiotics belonging to the class of fluoroquinolones and third and fourth-generation cephalosporins



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If antibiotics belonging to the fluoroquinolone and third- and fourth-generation cephalosporin classes are used, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests; the test must indicate that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

Use of antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class

If antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class are used, by means other than injection for single treatment, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests; the test must indicate that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

➤ MACRO AREA: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (AM)

The environment is one component to be protected from a One Health perspective. In this vision, human, animal, and environmental health are inextricably linked.

Taking care of the environment means avoiding pollution and waste of primary resources.

1. Techniques for limiting water waste

Aware of the importance of protecting the environment, the farmer takes measures to reduce water waste.

Water use

Presence of flooring covered with litter or self-cleaning flooring and/or equipped with mechanical cleaning tools capable of minimising the use of water for washing surfaces.

2. Harmful gases

The gases considered most harmful to the health and welfare of farm animals are ammonia (NH₃) and carbon dioxide (CO₂); numerous management or structural factors can influence the levels of these gases (e.g., animal size, animal density, flooring, bedding, etc.).

Adult animals

The concentration of gases in adult animal housing must remain within the following limits:

- NH₃ < 20 ppm;
- CO₂ < 3000 ppm.



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Annex 3.3

REGULATIONS FOR THE WELFARE OF BEEF CATTLE

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➤ GENERAL PART

1. Foreword

Primary production operators and all personnel involved in the management and care of animals and livestock facilities must be aware of the complex relationships between animal health, human health, and the environment, and that welfare can only be achieved through careful integration of these components and the various factors that constitute them.

Therefore, welfare must be achieved and maintained by allowing the animal to maximise its ability to adapt to the environment and by reducing stressors through effective farm management, prophylaxis, biosecurity, and livestock facility enhancement programmes. An appropriate level of animal welfare on the farm also means a lower incidence of disease.

The reduction and rationalisation of antimicrobial consumption, integrated with veterinary activities and advice, are direct consequences of optimal managerial/structural management and represent one of the main tools for containing the spread of antimicrobial resistance in animals, the environment, and food, with a view to *One Health*.

2. Area of application

The farms are structured for the breeding of cattle for meat production. Within this type of farm, different groups of animals will be evaluated:

- calves (both male and female) from birth to 6 months of age;
- Cattle 'in production'.

The requirements set out below apply to all red meat farms with more than 50 head of cattle, increased to 90 head for farms located in mountain areas, reared in stables without access to pasture, as specified in more detail below:

- free stabling on bedding;
- free-range housing on solid flooring;
- Free-range housing on slatted flooring.

Cattle must be reared in accordance with the requirements set out below for a minimum period of six months prior to slaughter. If this period exceeds six months, the relevant information may be included in the marketing of animals, primary production products, and foodstuffs derived from them, in accordance with Article 8 of Annex A to this Decree.

3. Definitions



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- **Employee:** a person who works in the establishment on a full-time or part-time basis (minimum half-day) to carry out daily feeding and care of the animals and the environment, excluding those who work exclusively in the fields and in the milking parlour.
- **Beef cattle:** male or female cattle over 6 months of age, reared for the production of red meat, including suckler cows and bulls.
- **Veal:** bovine animal (female or male) from birth to 6 months of age.
- **Primary production operator:** as defined in Article 2 of Annex A to this decree.

4. Membership of the SQNBA

In order to join the SQNBA, primary production operators must submit a specific application to a Certification Body listed on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests (MASAF) and must meet, amongst other things, the following access requirements, in accordance with Article 4(5), point 5.1.3. of Annex A to this decree:

- Compliance with legislative requirements, i.e., the absence of open non-conformities, as per the latest official public health inspection for the sectors relating to animal welfare, pharmacovigilance, and biosecurity, where available.
- Compliance with legislative requirements in the last self-assessment carried out in the previous 12 months.

The Certification Body carries out verification of compliance with the prerequisites in the dedicated section of the 'ClassyFarm' risk-based farm categorisation information system referred to in Article 9 of Annex A to this decree. This involves consulting the access traffic light system on the 'Certification Page' for each primary production operator.

A green traffic light indicates that the access prerequisites have been met and allows the Operator to proceed with the certification process. Conversely, a red traffic light blocks the continuation of the certification process, indicating that the access prerequisites have not been met.

5. Assessment requirements

Primary production operators who meet the SQNBA access requirements must satisfy the certification requirements of these Specifications for the four MACRO-AREAS listed below to obtain certification.

The multifactorial nature of wellbeing must necessarily integrate the MACRO-AREAS relating to:

- **MACRO-AREA 'BA', ANIMAL WELFARE:** includes the presence of suitable facilities (Facilities Area), conscious farm management (Management Area) and attention to animal conditions through the monitoring of direct welfare indicators (Direct Animal Measures Area - ABMs).
- **MACRO-AREA 'BS', BIOSAFETY:** based on the control of farm biosafety. Biosecurity is one of the main prevention tools available to primary production operators to prevent the



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introduction, development and spread of diseases in animals on the farm. A suitable biosecurity plan must be developed in consultation with the veterinary surgeon.

- **MACRO-AREA 'MV', CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES:** Conscious use of medication, with particular attention to antimicrobial treatments. Primary production operators who are aware of the integrated approach to achieving a high level of animal welfare on farms use veterinary medicines responsibly and in consultation with veterinarians to ensure appropriate therapeutic support for animals and combat antibiotic resistance.
- **MACRO-AREA 'AM', ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:** conscious water management. Since human health, animal health, and the environment are closely linked, it is considered necessary to also understand the broader environmental context through the *One Health* approach.

6. Labelling requirements

Information relating to the *rearing method*, as provided for in Article 8(1)(b) of Annex A to this decree, must be indicated, depending on the rearing system adopted, as follows: **Indoor farming**.

Where products from indoor rearing are marketed alongside products from holdings that follow other SQNBA specifications for cattle, the label must not include the information relating to point (b) 'Rearing method' as set out in Article 8(1) of Annex A to this decree.

➤ ANIMAL WELFARE MACRO-AREA (BA)

• MANAGEMENT AREA

1. Number of employees

The number of staff must be appropriate for the number of animals present on the premises to ensure proper control of their health and welfare.

When counting, the following should be taken into account:

- Those who work full-time should be counted as one person,
- those who work half-days should be counted as 0.5.

Number of employees
The number of staff caring for the animals must be at least one operator for every 400 animals.

2. Inspection and control of adult animals and calves

Daily inspections, either in person or via remote monitoring systems, are intended to supplement food distribution and daily management activities and involve observing all adult cattle and any calves housed in stables, with subsequent recording of their condition.

The inspection covers all groups of animals on the farm, divided into adult animals and calves. Highly specialised activities or those relating to the performance of specific tasks (e.g. feed



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distribution, preparation of the unifeed wagon, etc.) are not considered daily inspections. Any observations made (e.g. health, behaviour, etc.) must be recorded.

Cattle over 6 months of age
Animals must be inspected at least twice a day, and observations must be recorded.
Calves up to 6 months of age
Animals must be inspected at least twice a day, and observations must be recorded.

3. Nutrition

3.1 Management of feed and daily rations

Food systems should enable every individual to meet their needs in terms of food quantity and quality.

Cattle over 6 months of age
Presence of a suitable ration for the animals, specific to each group and composed of healthy foods.

3.2 Type of feeding

Feed should also be provided ad libitum to ensure that each animal can feed in accordance with its needs throughout the 24 hours. In split feeding, feed should be available almost continuously over a 24-hour period, including both fibre and concentrate (the latter must be administered at least twice).

Cattle over 6 months of age
Animals must have access to food at appropriate intervals, guaranteed 24 hours a day and divided correctly (concentrates administered at least twice).

4. Hygiene and cleanliness of surfaces used for lying down and walking

All surfaces used for lying down and walking, such as paddocks, floors, corridors and passageways, whether used to house young or adult animals, must be kept clean, dry and hygienically appropriate to avoid health problems and/or disturbance in the movements and behaviour of cattle. In addition, the facilities and surfaces available should ensure easy and safe access for staff to facilitate regular cleaning and access to bedding.

To ensure appropriate conditions, it is necessary to consider the hygiene, cleanliness, and management of the housing areas, flooring, and any bedding, and to assess, where appropriate, the frequency of restoration and replacement of the materials.



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All groups

All surfaces used for lying down and walking must be reasonably clean, dry and appropriately managed. In the case of bedding, this must be managed by replacing the bedding material as necessary, ensuring it is more prevalent than faecal material. When it comes to grates, they must be clean and free from faecal matter on as much of the available surface area as possible.

• **STRUCTURE AREA**

5. Number of places available in the feeding trough

Equipment and areas used for feeding cattle must be appropriately sized and constructed of suitable materials to ensure easy access and the ability to ingest the amount of feed necessary for their needs.

Cattle over 6 months of age

The following linear spaces are required for each animal:

- for animals under 200 kg live weight ≥ 0.4 m per animal;
- for animals weighing between 200 and 300 kg, live weight ≥ 0.5 m per animal;
- for animals between 300 and 400 kg live weight ≥ 0.6 m per animal;
- for animals between 400 and 500 kg live weight ≥ 0.65 m per animal;
- for animals over 600 kg live weight ≥ 0.7 m per animal.

Access to feed must comply with the following conditions:

- for split rations (**non-unifed**): 100% of the animals can feed at the same time;
- for **unifed** rations: more than 70% of animals can feed simultaneously.

6. Size and operation of drinking troughs

There must be an appropriate number of drinking troughs for the animals present and for the farm's capacity.

In particular, the location of the drinking troughs must facilitate water intake by all animals in the different areas of the farm.

Cattle over 6 months of age

At least one drinking trough for every 13 animals. For troughs, 6 cm per animal.

7. Freedom of movement for animals

The animal housing area must be correctly sized to ensure maximum comfort and hygiene, and must not cause unnecessary suffering or injury.

In particular, animals must have access to a covered area that is accessible and usable by each bovine animal, allowing them to lie down and move around normally without impediment.



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When calculating the available lying area, it should be noted that, for adult cattle, when the lying and feeding areas coincide, the feeding access area should be excluded from the calculation. In the case of pens or boxes that are square or similar in shape, or with the feeding trough located on the shorter side, approximately 1.5 metres of depth must be excluded from the area calculation.

In the case of enclosures with a distinctly rectangular shape with a feeding trough front at least 1.5 times the depth (short side) of the enclosure itself, the space to be excluded from the calculation of the available area may be reduced to 1 metre.

Cattle over 6 months of age

Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area greater than:

- 2.5 m² per animal for animals with a live weight of less than 500 kg;
- 3.0 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 500 and 600 kg;
- 3.5 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 600 and 700 kg;
- 4.0 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 700 and 800 kg;
- 4.5 m² per animal for animals with a live weight exceeding 800 kg

Calves from 8 weeks to 6 months old

Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area greater than:

- 1.70 m² per animal for animals with a live weight of less than 150 kg;
- 1.90 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 150 and 220 kg;
- 2.00 m² per animal for animals with a live weight exceeding 220 kg

Furthermore, animals must not be tethered at any time, including during feeding.

Calves aged between 3 and 8 weeks (*)

Calves must be reared in pairs or groups. The enclosure housing two calves must have a minimum area of 1 m² per animal, with a minimum length of 130 cm on the shortest side. For larger numbers, the area per animal (1 m²) must be multiplied by the number of calves present, with a minimum length of 130 cm for the shortest side of the enclosure.

(*) The requirement 'Calves aged between 3 and 8 weeks' is to be applied 24 months after the publication of the specification.

8. Pavement

Cattle hooves are a key factor in ensuring animal welfare, and walking areas must be suitable for preserving their integrity. Flooring refers to the surfaces used by cattle in the various areas of the establishment (e.g. feeding lanes, corridors, passageways, access points, exercise areas, etc.). The materials used for the design and construction of floors must be of appropriate quality. They must be chosen in accordance with the category of animal being reared, so that they are neither too slippery nor too abrasive.



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The flooring must be rough over the entire surface available to the animals to prevent slipping while they move, run, stand, lie down, or engage in social behaviour. It must be safe and free of obstacles to prevent injury.

Particular attention must also be paid to outdoor access.

Cattle over 6 months of age

The flooring (solid or slatted) must be suitable and rough (e.g. due to the presence of suitable grooves, rubber coating or a small amount of bedding) for most of the surfaces on which the animals walk.

9. Infirmary area

The establishment must implement an effective system for identifying animals that are suffering, sick or injured, and determine in which cases isolation, including preventive isolation, is necessary for their treatment. The recovery area, known as the infirmary, must be adapted to the condition of the animal requiring care.

Only animals with clearly identified pathologies should be present in the infirmary, and they must have access to food and fresh water ad libitum.

In the case of farms with no more than 100 animals, where the need to isolate sick or injured animals is sporadic, the infirmary may only be identifiable, i.e. the farmer must demonstrate that such an area can be created at any time, if necessary.

Infirmary

Presence of a specially prepared and identified room to accommodate sick or injured animals

10. Environmental conditions

10.1 Temperature and humidity

The thermal insulation of the structure, heating and ventilation must be capable of protecting the animals from heat and cold and at the same time ensuring good air quality, allowing air circulation, dust levels, temperature, relative humidity and gas concentrations (carbon dioxide, ammonia, etc.) to be kept within limits that are not harmful to the animals.

Beef cattle housing can vary widely, so appropriate conditions must be assessed based on the type of housing and the available cooling equipment.



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All groups

Presence of microclimatic conditions suitable for animals: e.g. natural ventilation (e.g. open stable) or suitable ventilation/aeration systems without automatic control systems, and, for calves, the possibility of protecting animals from heat and cold depending on weather conditions (e.g. insulation of cages, shade or windbreak tarpaulins, etc.).

10.2 Illuminance

Cattle need natural lighting or lighting programmes that respect the circadian rhythm of the day to orient themselves in their housing environments, engage in normal behaviour and social contact, and satisfy their physiological needs.

All groups

Animals housed without access to natural light must have an uninterrupted period of light of at least 8 hours (with a minimum intensity of at least 40 lux) and an uninterrupted period of darkness (or dim night lighting) of at least 8 hours.

• **ANIMAL MEASUREMENT AREA (ABMS)**

11. Skin lesions

All groups

Less than 20% of animals with minor skin lesions on hocks, bone protrusions and soft tissue

➤ **BIOSAFETY MACRO-AREA (BS)**

The biosecurity plan can be entrusted to a specialised company or managed internally, with your vet's agreement. The plan must include product specifications, safety data sheets, bait monitoring and follow-up actions with treatment records. In addition, orderly warehouse management and orderly removal of dirt are required.

1. Rodent and insect control

The presence of rodents and insects (e.g. flies) represents a significant risk for the introduction and spread of infectious pathogens on the farm. Therefore, their spread must be controlled.

Biosafety plan

Presence of defined and organic procedures, written in a biosecurity plan and implemented.

2. Water control

The quality of water intended for animals is essential to maintaining homeostasis of physiological and metabolic functions and to preventing damage to equipment and facilities. In addition, poor



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microbiological quality of drinking water could pose a risk to animal health and, consequently, to consumers.

Control of water not supplied by the public water supply

To ensure good drinking water quality, it is necessary to check the farm's water sources once a year through bacteriological analysis of the following parameters: *E. coli*, Enterococci, Total bacterial count.

3. Visitor access

All visitors entering the farm, including regular visitors and those entering for work reasons, may represent a vehicle for contamination; therefore, access must be managed.

Veterinarians, business consultants, and others are also considered visitors.

Visitor access

All visitors are required to wear disposable shoe covers before entering the premises, or they must wear boots that they leave at the company for their exclusive personal use.

➤ MACRO-AREA CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES (MV)

Any non-compliance with the requirements for this macro-area must be classified as serious unless it can be proven that it was used to safeguard the animal's health and life. In this case, references to certification must be deleted only for the animal or group of animals treated, appropriately identified.

1. Consumption of the veterinary medicinal product

DDD values (*)

The consumption of antibiotics on farms during the observation period provided for in paragraph 2 bis of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022, laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, expressed in DDD by ClassyFarm, must fall within one of the following conditions with respect to the national distribution of veterinary medicine consumption:

- a) the Defined Daily Dose (DDD) values are maintained or fall within the threshold value reported, in the first instance, in Annex XI of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022 laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, as regards direct payments for beef cattle;
- b) DDD values remain above the threshold mentioned, but are 10% lower than in 2022.

(*) Any amendments to the national threshold, the reduction percentage referred to in point (b) and the reference year may be made by decree of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.



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2. Prescriptions and company health monitoring

Antibiotic treatments

The Operator provides evidence of having administered antibiotic treatments only following a veterinary prescription issued as a result of company health monitoring, which involves assessing the sensitivity or resistance of company pathogens to antibiotic active ingredients through antibiotic sensitivity tests. Health monitoring is considered valid for multiple treatments, provided it is carried out at least once a year.

3. Sensitivity testing for antibiotic use

Use of antibiotics belonging to the class of fluoroquinolones and third and fourth-generation cephalosporins

If antibiotics belonging to the fluoroquinolone and third- and fourth-generation cephalosporin classes are used, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests; the test must indicate that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

Use of antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class

If antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class are used, by means other than injection for single treatment, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests; the test must indicate that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

➤ MACRO-AREA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (AM)

The environment is one component to be protected from a One Health perspective. In this vision, human, animal, and environmental health are inextricably linked.

Taking care of the environment means avoiding pollution and waste of primary resources.

1. Techniques for limiting water waste

Aware of the importance of protecting the environment, the farmer takes measures to reduce water waste.

Water use

Presence of flooring covered with litter or self-cleaning flooring and/or equipped with mechanical cleaning tools capable of minimising the use of water for washing surfaces.



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2. Harmful gases

The gases considered most harmful to the health and welfare of farm animals are ammonia (NH_3) and carbon dioxide (CO_2); numerous management or structural factors can influence the levels of these gases (e.g., animal size, animal density, flooring, bedding, etc.).

Adult animals
The concentration of gases in adult animal housing must remain within the following limits: - $\text{NH}_3 < 20$ ppm; - $\text{CO}_2 < 3000$ ppm.



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➤ GENERAL PART

1. Foreword

Primary production operators and all personnel involved in the management and care of animals and livestock facilities must be aware of the complex relationships among animal health, human health, and the environment, and that welfare can only be achieved through careful integration of these components and the various factors that constitute them.

Therefore, welfare must be achieved and maintained by allowing the animal to maximise its ability to adapt to the environment and by reducing stressors through effective farm management, prophylaxis, biosecurity, and livestock facility enhancement programmes. An appropriate level of animal welfare on the farm also means a lower incidence of disease.

The reduction and rationalisation of antimicrobial consumption, integrated with veterinary activities and advice, are direct consequences of optimal managerial/structural management and represent one of the main tools for containing the spread of antimicrobial resistance in animals, the environment, and food, with a view to *One Health*.

2. Area of application

The farms are structured for the rearing of cattle for milk and/or meat production in small establishments. Within this type of farm, different groups of animals will be assessed:

- calves (both male and female) from birth to 6 months of age;
- Cattle in production (both male and female), over 6 months of age.

The requirements set out below apply to all cattle farms with up to 50 head of cattle, increased to 90 head for farms located in mountain areas, as specified below:

- free-range housing on litter or in cubicles, with or without access to pasture. Where grazing is practised, at least 30% of the animals must be grazed, or, in any event, all non-lactating animals must have access to grazing for at least 60 days per year;
- fixed housing in which all non-lactating animals have access to at least 60 days/year of grazing or free-range housing. For these specifications, 'non-lactating animals' refers exclusively to 'animals aged 6 months at first calving'.

Cattle must be reared in accordance with the requirements set out below for a minimum period of six months prior to slaughter. If this period exceeds six months, the relevant information may be included in the marketing of animals, primary production products, and foodstuffs derived from them, in accordance with Article 8 of Annex A to this Decree.

3. Definitions

- **Employee:** a person who works in the establishment on a full-time or part-time basis (minimum half-day) to carry out daily feeding and care of the animals and the environment, excluding those who work exclusively in the fields and in the milking parlour.



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- **Small-scale farming:** a farm comprising a maximum of 50 head of cattle reared within the same epidemiological unit, regardless of ownership; this limit is raised to 90 head for farms located in mountainous areas.
- **Animal-Based Measures (ABMs):** direct measures, i.e. standard criteria for determining the welfare status of animals based on their conditions.
- **Body condition score (BCS):** a method for assessing the physical condition of animals.
- **Cattle in production:** animals over 6 months of age, such as beef cattle, dairy cattle, dry cows, lactating cows, heifers and breeding cattle.
- **Beef cattle:** animals over 6 months old, male or female, reared for red meat production, including suckler cows and bulls.
- **Dairy cattle:** females raised for the production of milk intended for human consumption.
- **Heifer:** bovine over 6 months of age that has not yet calved.
- **Lactating cow:** a cow that produces milk after giving birth.
- **Dry cow:** a cow that has finished lactation.
- **Pasture:** grassland or other vegetation that can fully or partially cover daily feed requirements, with a total size of no less than 500 m² per Adult Livestock Unit, freely accessible or with rotational grazing, equipped, depending on needs and possibilities, with natural shelters (trees, ravines, caves, etc.) or artificial shelters (roofs, shelters, etc.) appropriate to the season and location.
- **Veal:** bovine animal (female or male) from birth to 6 months of age.
- **Primary production operator:** as defined in Article 2 of Annex A to this decree.

4. Membership of the SQNBA

In order to join the SQNBA, primary production operators must submit a specific application to a Certification Body listed on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests (MASAF) and must meet, amongst other things, the following access requirements, in accordance with Article 4(5), point 5.1.3. of Annex A to this decree:

- Compliance with legislative requirements, i.e., the absence of open non-conformities, as per the latest official public health inspection for the sectors relating to animal welfare, pharmacovigilance, and biosecurity, where available.
- Compliance with legislative requirements in the last self-assessment carried out in the previous 12 months.

The Certification Body carries out verification of compliance with the prerequisites in the dedicated section of the 'ClassyFarm' risk-based farm categorisation information system referred to in Article 9 of Annex A to this decree. This involves consulting the access traffic light system on the 'Certification Page' for each primary production operator.



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A green traffic light indicates that the access prerequisites have been met and allows the Operator to proceed with the certification process. Conversely, a red traffic light blocks the continuation of the certification process, indicating that the access prerequisites have not been met.

5. Assessment requirements

The multifactorial nature of welfare must necessarily integrate different MACRO-AREAS.

Primary production operators who meet the prerequisites for access to SQNBA must satisfy the certification requirements of these Regulations relating to the MACRO-AREAS listed below in order to obtain certification:

- **MACRO-AREA 'BA', ANIMAL WELFARE:** includes the presence of suitable facilities (Facilities Area), conscious farm management (Management Area) and attention to animal conditions through the monitoring of direct welfare indicators (Direct Animal Measures Area - ABMs).
- **MACRO-AREA 'BS', BIOSAFETY:** based on the control of farm biosafety. Biosecurity is one of the main prevention tools available to primary production operators to prevent the introduction, development and spread of diseases in animals on the farm. A suitable biosecurity plan must be developed in consultation with the veterinary surgeon.
- **MACRO-AREA 'MV', CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES:** Conscious use of medication, with particular attention to antimicrobial treatments. Primary production operators who are aware of the integrated approach to achieving a high level of animal welfare on farms use veterinary medicines responsibly and in consultation with veterinarians to ensure appropriate therapeutic support for animals and combat antibiotic resistance.

6. Labelling requirements

The information relating to the rearing method, as provided for in Article 8(1)(b) of Annex A to this decree, must be stated as:

- small-scale farming utilising grazing;
- small-scale livestock farming.

The distinction between the two farming methods is based on the actual use of grazing as provided, regardless of whether the animals are kept in free-range or fixed housing.

Where products from small-scale farms or small-scale farms utilising grazing are marketed together and/or in conjunction with products from farms that follow other SQNBA specifications for cattle, the label must not include the information relating to point (b) 'Rearing method' as set out in Article 8(1) of Annex A to this decree.

➤ ANIMAL WELFARE MACRO-AREA (BA)

1. Inspection and control of adult animals and calves



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Daily inspections, either in person or via remote monitoring systems, are intended to supplement food distribution and daily management activities and involve observing all adult cattle and any calves housed in stables, with subsequent recording of their condition.

The inspection covers all groups of animals on the farm, divided into adult animals and calves.

Any observations made (e.g. health, behaviour, etc.) must be recorded.

Adult cattle (dairy, beef)
In the stable: During stable rearing, animals must be inspected at least twice or more per day, and observations must be recorded.
Calves
In the stable: During stable rearing, animals must be inspected at least twice a day, and observations must be recorded.

- **STRUCTURE AREA**

2. Freedom of movement for animals

Assess the covered area used for lying down (bunks or permanent bedding). Where the lying and feeding areas coincide, exclude the feeding access area (approximately 1 m).

Adult cattle (dairy, beef)
In the stable – Free housing (excluding temporary shelters used for emergencies). A minimum available area ensures freedom of movement: • 6 m² per animal on bedding for adult cows, or by a number of usable cubicles exceeding 90% of the number of cattle present; • 3.5 m² per animal on bedding for dairy heifers or a number of usable cubicles exceeding 90% of the number of heifers present; • 2.5 m² per animal up to 400 kg live weight and an additional 0.5 m² per animal for every 100 kg up to 800 kg live weight for beef cattle.
In the stable - Fixed housing: all animals have a designated place to lie down, and none are placed in areas that are not intended or unsuitable. All non-lactating cattle must be allowed to roam freely for at least 60 days per year, either on pasture or by ensuring they have access, for the same period, to an exercise area of 6 m ² per animal.
Grazing: When animals are kept at pasture, the entire grazing area available to the animals is assessed.
Calves from 8 weeks to 6 months old
In the stable - Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area greater than: • 1.70 m² per animal for animals with a live weight of less than 150 kg;



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- 1.90 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 150 and 220 kg;
 - 2.00 m² per animal for animals with a live weight exceeding 220 kg
- Furthermore, animals must not be tethered at any time, including during feeding.

Calves aged 3 to 8 weeks (*)

In the stable - Calves must be reared in pairs or groups.

The enclosure housing two calves must have a minimum area of 1 m² per animal, with a minimum length of 130 cm on the shortest side.

For larger numbers, the area per animal (1 m²) must be multiplied by the number of calves present, with a minimum length of 130 cm for the shortest side of the enclosure.

(*) The requirement 'Calves aged between 3 and 8 weeks' is to be applied 24 months after the publication of the specification.

3. Flooring of the stable

Cattle hooves are a key factor in ensuring animal welfare, and walking areas must be suitable for preserving their integrity. Flooring refers to the walkable surfaces used by cows in production in different areas of the facility (e.g. feeding lanes, corridors, passageways, access points, exercise areas, etc.). The materials used for the design and construction of floors must be of appropriate quality. They must be chosen in accordance with the category of animal being reared, so that they are neither too slippery nor too abrasive.

The flooring must be rough over the entire surface available to the animals to prevent slipping while they move, run, stand, lie down, or engage in social behaviour. It must be safe and free of obstacles to prevent injury.

Particular attention must also be paid to any access points to external enclosures.

Adult cattle (dairy, beef)

In the stable - The floor (solid or slatted) must be suitable and rough on all surfaces where cattle walk, or there must be bedding made of suitable organic material, i.e. abundant, non-abrasive, well preserved and absorbent.

- **ANIMAL MEASUREMENT AREA (ABMs)**

4. Nutritional status measured using *Body Condition Score (BCS)*

The assessment of animals' body condition, carried out using the Body Condition Score (BCS), is a tool for monitoring their health and welfare.

Monitoring this parameter is important for assessing the health status and ensuring the nutritional needs of the animals are met.

BCS is measured in animals not undergoing treatment on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a very thin (cachectic) animal and 5 a very fat (obese) animal.

Adult dairy cattle



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BCS values must be between 2 and 4.25.

The number of animals with BCS outside the limits must be less than 10%.

Adult beef cattle

BCS values must be above 2.

The number of animals with a BCS below the limit must be less than 10%.

➤ **BIOSAFETY MACRO-AREA (BS)**

The biosecurity plan can be entrusted to a specialised company or managed internally. The plan must include product specifications, safety data sheets, bait monitoring and follow-up actions with treatment records. In addition, orderly warehouse management and orderly removal of dirt are required.

1. Rodent and insect control

The presence of rodents and insects (e.g. flies, etc.) represents a significant risk for the introduction and spread of infectious pathogens on the farm. Therefore, their spread must be controlled.

Biosafety plan

In the stable - Presence of defined and organic procedures, written in a biosecurity plan and implemented.

2. Water control

The quality of water intended for animals is essential to maintaining homeostasis of physiological and metabolic functions and to preventing damage to equipment and facilities. In addition, poor microbiological quality of drinking water could pose a risk to animal health and, consequently, to consumers.

Water control

In the stable - To ensure good drinking water quality, the farm's water sources and supply must be checked once a year through bacteriological analysis of the following parameters: *E. coli*, Enterococci, Total bacterial count.

3. Visitor access

All visitors entering the farm, including regular visitors who enter for work reasons, can be a vehicle for contamination, and it is therefore necessary to manage access.

Veterinarians, business consultants, and others are also considered visitors.

Visitor access

All visitors are required to wear disposable shoe covers before entering the facility, or to wear boots they leave on the farm for personal use only.

➤ **MACRO-AREA CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES (MV)**



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Any non-compliance with the requirements for this macro-area must be classified as serious unless it can be proven that it was used to safeguard the animal's health and life. In this case, references to certification must be deleted only for the animal or group of animals treated, appropriately identified.

1. Consumption of the veterinary medicinal product

The consumption of antibiotics on farms during the observation period provided for in paragraph 2 bis of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022, laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, expressed in DDD by ClassyFarm, must fall within one of the following conditions with respect to the national distribution of veterinary medicine consumption:

- a) the Defined Daily Dose (DDD) values are maintained or fall within the threshold value reported, in the first instance, in Annex XI of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022 laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, with regard to direct payments for cattle farms in small establishments producing milk and/or meat;
- b) DDD values remain above the threshold mentioned, but are 10% lower than in 2022.

(*) Any amendments to the national threshold, the reduction percentage referred to in point (b) and the reference year may be made by decree of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.

2. Prescriptions and company health monitoring

Use of antibiotics

The Operator provides evidence of having administered antibiotic treatments only following a veterinary prescription issued as a result of company health monitoring, which involves assessing the sensitivity or resistance of company pathogens to antibiotic active ingredients through antibiotic sensitivity tests. Health monitoring is considered valid for multiple treatments, provided it is carried out at least once a year.

3. Sensitivity testing for antibiotic use

Use of antibiotics belonging to the class of fluoroquinolones and third and fourth-generation cephalosporins

In the event that antibiotics belonging to the Fluoroquinolone and third- and fourth-generation Cephalosporin classes are used, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests, indicating that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

Use of antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class



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In the event that antibiotics belonging to the Macrolide class are used, by means other than injection for single treatment, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests indicating that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.



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➤ GENERAL PART

1. Foreword

Primary production operators and all personnel involved in the management and care of animals and livestock facilities must be aware of the complex relationships among animal health, human health, and the environment, and that welfare can only be achieved through careful integration of these components and the various factors that constitute them.

Therefore, welfare must be achieved and maintained by allowing the animal to maximise its ability to adapt to the environment and by reducing stressors through effective farm management, prophylaxis, biosecurity, and livestock facility enhancement programmes. An appropriate level of animal welfare on the farm also means a lower incidence of disease.

The reduction and rationalisation of antimicrobial consumption, integrated with veterinary activities and advice, are direct consequences of optimal managerial/structural management and represent one of the main tools for containing the spread of antimicrobial resistance in animals, the environment, and food, with a view to *One Health*.

2. Area of application

The farms are structured for the rearing of cattle for milk and/or meat production, using pasture. Within this type of farm, different groups of animals will be assessed:

- calves (both male and female) from birth to 6 months of age;
- Cattle in production (both male and female), over 6 months of age.

The requirements set out below apply to all farms that rear cattle:

- free stabling on litter or cubicles with access to pasture for at least 30% of the animals for 60 days/year
- raised entirely on pasture;

Cattle must be reared in accordance with the requirements set out below for a minimum period of six months prior to slaughter. If this period exceeds six months, the relevant information may be included in the marketing of animals, primary production products, and foodstuffs derived from them, in accordance with Article 8 of Annex A to this Decree.

3. Definitions

- **Employee:** a person who works in the establishment on a full-time or part-time basis (minimum half-day) to carry out daily feeding and care of the animals and the environment, excluding those who work exclusively in the fields and in the milking parlour.
- **Farming with the use of pasture:** Farming in which at least 30% of cattle have access to pasture for at least 60 days per year.
- **Fully pasture-based rearing:** the animals do not, except in exceptional cases, have access to indoor housing areas and are kept on pasture at all times.



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- **Animal-Based Measures (ABMs):** Direct measures, i.e. standard criteria for determining the welfare status of animals based on their condition.
- **Body condition score (BCS):** Assessment of the body condition of animals.
- **Cattle in production:** animals over 6 months of age, such as beef cattle, dairy cattle, dry cows, lactating cows, heifers and breeding cattle.
- **Beef cattle:** animals over 6 months old, male or female, reared for red meat production, including suckler cows and bulls.
- **Dairy cattle:** females raised for the production of milk intended for human consumption.
- **Lactating cow:** a cow that produces milk after giving birth.
- **Dry cow:** a cow that has finished lactation.
- **Breeding cattle:** male animals reared for breeding.
- **Veal:** bovine animal (female or male) from birth to 6 months of age.
- **Heifer:** bovine over 6 months of age that has not yet calved.
- **Primary production operator:** as defined in Article 2 of Annex A to this decree.
- **Pasture:** grassland or other vegetation that can fully or partially cover daily feed requirements, with a total size of no less than 500 m² per Adult Livestock Unit, freely accessible or with rotational grazing, equipped, depending on needs and possibilities, with natural shelters (trees, ravines, caves, etc.) or artificial shelters (roofs, shelters, etc.) appropriate to the season and location.

4. Membership of the SQNBA

In order to join the SQNBA, primary production operators must submit a specific application to a Certification Body listed on the official website of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forests (MASAF) and must meet, amongst other things, the following access requirements, in accordance with Article 4(5), point 5.1.3. of Annex A to this decree:

- Compliance with legislative requirements, i.e., the absence of open non-conformities, as per the latest official public health inspection for the sectors relating to animal welfare, pharmacovigilance, and biosecurity, where available.
- Compliance with legislative requirements in the last self-assessment carried out in the previous 12 months.

The Certification Body carries out verification of compliance with the prerequisites in the dedicated section of the 'ClassyFarm' risk-based farm categorisation information system referred to in Article 9 of Annex A to this decree. This involves consulting the access traffic light system on the 'Certification Page' for each primary production operator.

A green traffic light indicates that the access prerequisites have been met and allows the Operator to proceed with the certification process. Conversely, a red traffic light blocks the continuation of the certification process, indicating that the access prerequisites have not been met.

5. Assessment requirements



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The multifactorial nature of welfare must necessarily integrate different MACRO-AREAS.

Primary production operators who meet the prerequisites for access to SQNBA must satisfy the certification requirements of these Regulations relating to the MACRO-AREAS listed below in order to obtain certification:

- **MACRO-AREA 'BA', ANIMAL WELFARE:** includes the presence of suitable facilities (Facilities Area), conscious farm management (Management Area) and attention to animal conditions through the monitoring of direct welfare indicators (Direct Animal Measures Area - ABMs).
- **MACRO-AREA 'BS', BIOSAFETY:** based on the control of farm biosafety. Biosecurity is one of the main prevention tools available to primary production operators to prevent the introduction, development and spread of diseases in animals on the farm. A suitable biosecurity plan must be developed in consultation with the veterinary surgeon.
- **MACRO-AREA 'MV', CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES:** Conscious use of medication, with particular attention to antimicrobial treatments. Primary production operators who are aware of the integrated approach to achieving a high level of animal welfare on farms use veterinary medicines responsibly and in consultation with veterinarians to ensure appropriate therapeutic support for animals and combat antibiotic resistance.
- **MACRO-AREA 'AM', ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:** conscious water management. Since human health, animal health, and the environment are closely linked, it is considered necessary to also understand the broader environmental context through the *One Health* approach.

6. Labelling requirements

Information relating to the *rearing method*, as provided for in Article 8(1)(b) of Annex A to this decree, must be indicated, depending on the rearing system adopted, as follows:

- *farming with the use of pasture;*
- *entirely pasture-based rearing;*

Where products from grazing farms or farms practising full-time grazing are marketed together with products from farms that follow other SQNBA specifications for cattle, the label must not include the information relating to point (b) 'Rearing method' as set out in Article 8(1) of Annex A to this decree.

➤ ANIMAL WELFARE MACRO-AREA (BA)

- **MANAGEMENT AREA**

1. Number of employees



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Requirement applicable only to farms with more than 50 head of cattle, increased to 90 head for farms located in mountain areas. The number of staff must be appropriate for the number of animals present on the premises to ensure proper control of their health and welfare.

When counting, the following should be taken into account:

- Those who work full-time should be counted as one person,
- those who work half-days should be counted as 0.5.

Dairy cattle
In the stable: The number of employees must take into account: - At least one Operator for every 80 animals (if the same person also performs milking operations) - at least one Operator for every 200 animals (if the same person does not perform milking)
Beef cattle
Grazing: The number of employees must take into account: - One operator per 400 animals

2. Inspection and control of adult animals and calves

Daily inspections, either in person or via remote monitoring systems, are intended to supplement food distribution and daily management activities and involve observing all adult cattle and any calves housed in stables, with subsequent recording of their condition.

The inspection covers all groups of animals on the farm, divided into adult animals and calves.

Highly specialised activities or those relating to the performance of specific tasks (e.g., milking with specific tasks assigned, feed distribution, preparation of the unifeed wagon, etc.) are not considered daily inspections.

Any observations made (e.g. health, behaviour, etc.) must be recorded.

Adult cattle (dairy, beef)
In the stable: During stable rearing, animals must be inspected at least twice or more per day, and observations must be recorded.
Calves
In the stable: During stable rearing, animals must be inspected at least twice a day, and observations must be recorded.

• **STRUCTURE AREA**

3. Freedom of movement for animals

Assess the covered area used for lying down (bunks or permanent bedding). In the case of free-range housing, if the lying and feeding areas coincide, exclude the feeding access area (approximately 1 m).



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Adult cattle (dairy, beef)
In the stable - Free-range housing (excluding temporary shelters used for emergencies): A minimum available area ensures freedom of movement: • 6 m² per animal on bedding for adult cows or by a number of usable cubicles exceeding 90% of the number of cows present; • 3.5 m² per animal on bedding for dairy heifers, or a number of usable cubicles exceeding 90 per cent of the number of cows present; • 2.5 m² per animal up to 400 kg live weight and an additional 0.5 m² per animal for every 100 kg up to 800 kg live weight for beef cattle. Grazing: When animals are kept at pasture, the entire grazing area available to the animals is assessed.
Calves from 8 weeks to 6 months old
in the stable: Freedom of movement is ensured by an available area greater than: • 1.70 m² per animal for animals with a live weight of less than 150 kg; • 1.90 m² per animal for animals with a live weight between 150 and 220 kg; • 2.00 m² per animal for animals with a live weight exceeding 220 kg Furthermore, animals must not be tethered at any time, including during feeding.
Calves aged 3 to 8 weeks (*)
in the stable: Calves must be reared in pairs or groups. The enclosure housing two calves must have a minimum area of 1 m² per animal and a minimum length of 130 cm on the shortest side. For larger numbers, the area per animal (1 m²) must be multiplied by the number of calves present, with a minimum length of 130 cm for the shortest side of the enclosure.

(*) The requirement ‘Calves aged between 3 and 8 weeks’ is to be applied 24 months after the publication of the specification.

4. Flooring of the stable

Cattle hooves are a key factor in ensuring animal welfare, and walking areas must be suitable for preserving their integrity. Flooring refers to the walkable surfaces used by cows in production in different areas of the facility (e.g. feeding lanes, corridors, passageways, access points, exercise areas, etc.). The materials used for the design and construction of floors must be of appropriate quality. They must be chosen in accordance with the category of animal being reared, so that they are neither too slippery nor too abrasive.

The flooring must be rough over the entire surface available to the animals to prevent slipping while they move, run, stand, lie down, or engage in social behaviour. It must be safe and free of obstacles to prevent injury.

Particular attention must also be paid to outdoor access.



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Adult cattle (dairy, beef)

in the stable: The flooring (solid or slatted) must be suitable and rough on all surfaces where cattle walk, or there must be bedding made of suitable organic material, i.e. abundant, non-abrasive, well-preserved and absorbent.

5. Infirmary area (Requirement applicable only to farms with more than 100 animals).

The shelter area, called the infirmary, must be adapted to the condition of the animal requiring assistance. Only animals with clearly identified pathologies should be present in the infirmary, and they must have access to food and fresh water ad libitum. Even during the grazing phase, the operator/attendant must implement an effective system to identify and capture animals that are suffering, sick or injured, and determine in which cases isolation, including preventive isolation, is necessary to treat them.

Infirmary

In the stable: presence of a designated room specially prepared to accommodate sick or injured animals, equipped with dry bedding or a comfortable mat, where the clinical condition so requires.

On pasture: presence of containment or capture areas, including mobile ones, capable of accommodating sick or injured animals for treatment (does not apply to grazing on land adjacent to the stable).

• ANIMAL MEASUREMENT AREA (ABMs)

6. Nutritional status measured using *Body Condition Score (BCS)*

The assessment of animals' body condition, carried out using the Body Condition Score (BCS), is a tool for monitoring their health and welfare. Monitoring this parameter is important to ensure the health status and nutritional needs of the animals are met.

BCS is measured on a scale of one to five, where one means a very thin (cachectic) animal and five means a very fat (obese) animal.

Adult dairy cattle

BCS values must be between 2 and 4.25.

The number of animals with BCS outside the limits must be less than 10%.

Adult beef cattle

BCS values must be above 2.

The number of animals with a BCS below the limit must be less than 10%.

7. Annual mortality of adult animals, over 6 months of age

This requirement applies only to farms with more than 100 animals.



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The data to be collected and recorded must take into account adult cows (over 6 months of age), whether lactating or dry, that have died spontaneously on the farm, been euthanised, or emergency slaughtered (MSU) in the last 12 months, compared to the number of adult cows (lactating and dry) present on the day of assessment.

Adult cattle (dairy, beef)
Mortality must be less than 5%

➤ BIOSAFETY MACRO-AREA (BS)

The biosecurity plan can be entrusted to a specialised company or managed internally. The plan must include product specifications, safety data sheets, bait monitoring and follow-up actions with treatment records. In addition, orderly warehouse management and orderly removal of dirt are required.

1. Rodent and insect control

The presence of rodents and insects (e.g. flies, etc.) represents a significant risk for the introduction and spread of infectious pathogens on the farm. Therefore, their spread must be controlled.

Biosafety plan
in the stable: Presence of defined and organic procedures, written in a biosecurity plan and implemented.

2. Water control

The quality of water intended for animals is essential to maintaining homeostasis of physiological and metabolic functions and to preventing damage to equipment and facilities. In addition, poor microbiological quality of drinking water could pose a risk to animal health and, consequently, to consumers.

Water control
In the stable: to ensure good quality drinking water, it is necessary to check the farm's water sources once a year through bacteriological analysis of the following parameters: <i>E. coli</i> , Enterococci, Total bacterial count.

3. Visitor access

All visitors entering the farm, including regular visitors who enter for work reasons, can be a vehicle for contamination, and it is therefore necessary to manage access. Veterinarians, business consultants, and others are also considered visitors.

Visitor access



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In the stable all visitors are required to wear disposable shoe covers before entering the facility, or they must wear boots that they leave on the farm for their exclusive personal use.

➤ MACRO-AREA CONSCIOUS USE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES (MV)

Any non-compliance with the requirements for this macro-area must be classified as serious unless it can be proven that it was used to safeguard the animal's health and life. In this case, references to certification must be deleted only for the animal or group of animals treated, appropriately identified.

1. Consumption of veterinary medicinal products: DDD values

DDD values (*)

The consumption of antibiotics on farms during the observation period provided for in paragraph 2 bis of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022, laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 and subsequent amendments and additions, expressed in DDD by ClassyFarm, must fall within one of the following conditions with respect to the national distribution of veterinary medicine consumption:

- a) the Defined Daily Dose (DDD) values are maintained or fall within the threshold value reported, in the first instance, in Annex XI of the Ministerial Decree. 23 December 2022 laying down national provisions for the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021, as amended and supplemented, with regard to direct payments for bovine animals for milk and/or beef production;
- b) DDD values remain above the threshold mentioned, but are 10% lower than in 2022.

(*) Any amendments to the national threshold, the reduction percentage referred to in point (b) and the reference year may be made by decree of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry.

2. Prescriptions and company health monitoring

Antibiotic treatments

The Operator provides evidence of having administered antibiotic treatments only following a veterinary prescription issued as a result of company health monitoring, which involves assessing the sensitivity or resistance of company pathogens to antibiotic active ingredients through antibiotic sensitivity tests. Health monitoring is considered valid for multiple treatments, provided it is carried out at least once a year.

3. Sensitivity testing for antibiotic use

Use of antibiotics belonging to the class of fluoroquinolones and third and fourth-generation cephalosporins



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If antibiotics belonging to the fluoroquinolone and third- and fourth-generation cephalosporin classes are used, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests; the test must indicate that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

Use of antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class

If antibiotics belonging to the macrolide class are used, by means other than injection for single treatment, the Operator shall provide documented evidence that the treatment was carried out only following the indications provided by in vitro antibiotic sensitivity tests; the test must indicate that other classes of molecules were not effective in vitro against the bacterial agent causing the disease.

➤ MACRO AREA: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (AM)

The requirements of this MACRO-AREA are applicable only during the stages of rearing in stables. The environment is one component to be protected from a One Health perspective. In this vision, human, animal, and environmental health are inextricably linked.

Taking care of the environment means avoiding pollution and waste of primary resources.

1. Techniques for limiting water waste

Aware of the importance of protecting the environment, the farmer takes measures to reduce water waste.

Water use

in the stable: Presence of flooring covered with litter or self-cleaning flooring and/or equipped with mechanical cleaning tools capable of minimising the use of water for washing surfaces.