

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: January 10, 2025

Report Number: RP2025-0001

Report Name: An Overview of the Philippine Department of Agriculture's Two-Stage Inspection Procedure for Imported Agricultural Products

Country: Philippines

Post: Manila

Report Category: FAIRS Subject Report, Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Certification, Livestock and Products, Poultry and Products

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Report Highlights:

The Philippines operates a two-stage inspection process to clear imported agricultural products. Under the Department of Agriculture (DA) Administrative Circular No. 6 (2022), DA conducts a physical inspection at the port (first stage, known as the first border) and at the authorized premise or warehouse (second stage, known as the second border). For meat and meat products, the Bureau of Animal Industry and National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) serve as the first and second border inspectors, respectively. The NMIS also implements Memorandum Circular No. 05-2023-011 (2023) to manage adverse food safety and quality findings during the conduct of meat inspection at the licensed cold storage warehouses.

The Philippine Department of Agriculture (DA) issued [Administrative Circular \(AC\) No. 6](#) in June 2022, providing the revised rules and regulations on the importation of agri-fishery products. This Circular is part of the efforts to streamline and harmonize regulatory policies, enhance transparency, and facilitate trade, while protecting human, animal or plant life or health and prevent the entry and spread of pests or diseases among animals and plants. It also covers the inspection procedures applied to imported products conducted by competent authorities assigned at the port of entry (first border inspection) and at licensed premises or warehouses (second border inspection).

First Stage: Inspection at the Port

The DA border inspector at the port of entry generally conducts document review and physical inspection of the consignment to check completeness of supplied documents, verify compliance with food safety and sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements, and assess the risk of the packaging as a vector for the entry of unwanted, harmful or regulated pests, diseases or organisms, among others. In the case of imported meat and meat products, the Veterinary Quarantine Officer from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) acts as the first border inspector. Only the consignments cleared by BAI can be released and transferred to a licensed cold storage warehouse (CSW), where it undergoes second border inspection by the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS).

AC 6 (2022) Article V, Section 2 cites that a container with any evidence of thawed contents, whether partially or wholly, shall be automatically refused entry at the first border, and disposed in any of the following manners: (a) confiscated or destroyed; (b) returned to the country of origin; and (c) shipped to a third country. Notwithstanding, the Circular indicates that the decisions of the concerned DA bureau or agency head may be appealed to the DA Secretary within 10 days from notice of action.

Second Stage: Inspection at the Licensed CSW

The NMIS Meat Inspection Officer (MIO) serves as the DA second border inspector. Under AC 6 (2022), the second border inspector may issue a Hold Order if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the imported meat have not been transported in compliance with the procedure indicated in Section 5 of Article IV, have undergone any change during transfer, or have been accessed during transfer.

Additionally, the NMIS implements [Memorandum Circular \(MC\) No. 5-2023-011](#) dated April 28, 2023, to manage adverse food safety and quality findings during the conduct of meat inspection at a licensed CSW. Adverse findings during arrival and the conduct of organoleptic examination at the CSW relate to issues of food safety, broken BAI seal, incomplete and/or inconsistent information on import documents, tampered or falsified NMIS forms or certificates, incomplete or mislabeled imported meat items, and importation in excess of the volume stated on the import documents. MC 5 (2023) provides the detailed procedures for each adverse finding.

For imported meat with an adverse food safety issue, the actions of NMIS MIO differ depending on the extent of the issue observed, as outlined in MC 5 (2023):

- a. If the whole lot of meat unloaded at the CSW has an obvious food safety issue: The MIO shall issue a Hold Order and Condemnation Order for the whole lot or container van. The NMIO

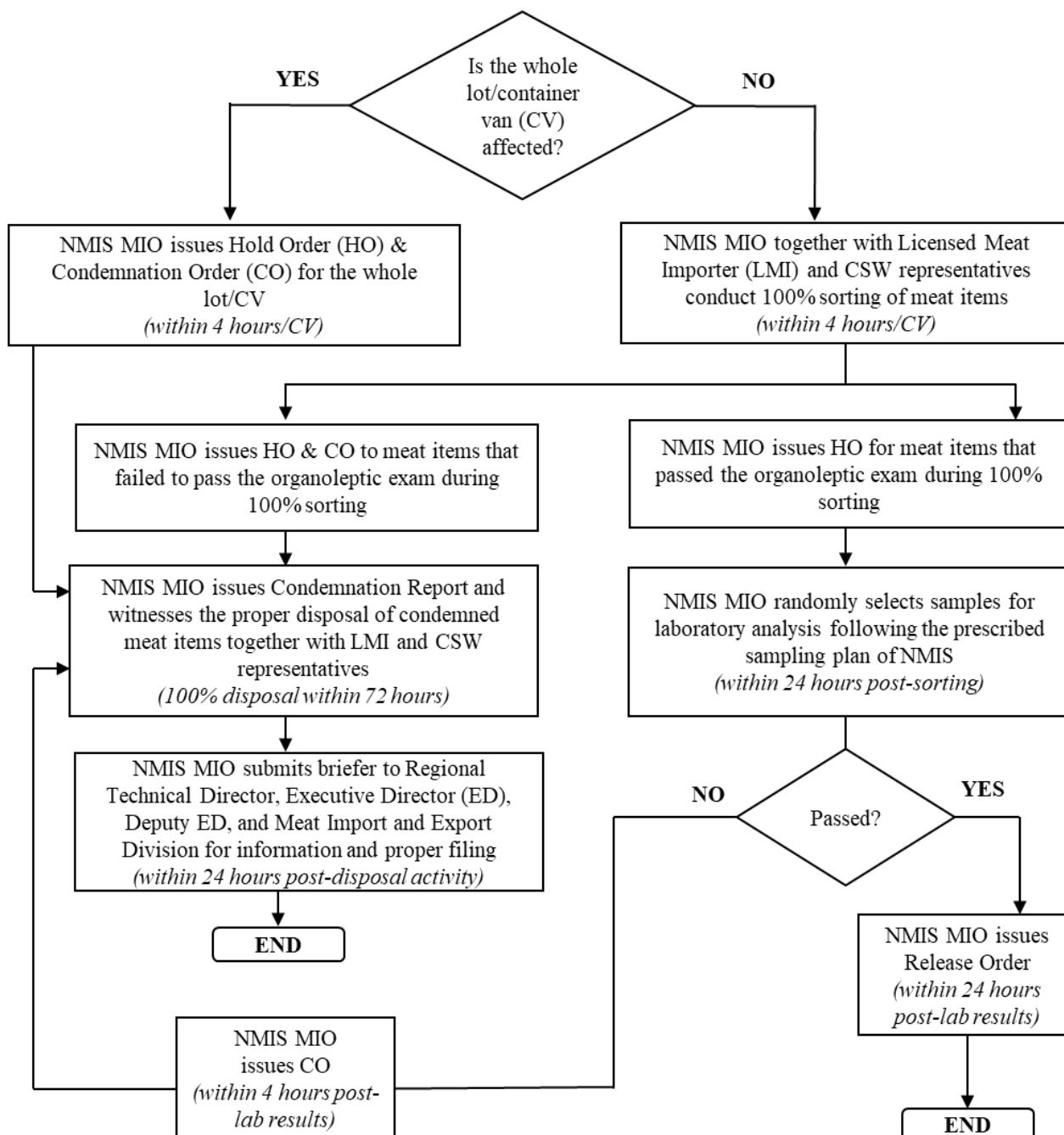
subsequently issues a Condemnation Report and witnesses the proper disposal of the condemned meat with the licensed meat importer (LMI) and CSW representative.

- b. If only a portion of meat unloaded at the CSW is affected: The MIO shall conduct a 100 percent organoleptic examination, while sorting meat items together with the LMI and CSW representative. For meat items that failed to pass after sorting, MIO subsequently issues a Hold Order, Condemnation Order, and Condemnation Report to all affected meat items. For meat items that passed after sorting, MIO issues a Hold Order and randomly selects samples for laboratory analysis. A Release Order shall be issued to the lot that passed the laboratory analysis, while a Condemnation Report for samples that failed to pass the laboratory analysis.

The NMIS' [MC No. 9-2008-5](#) released in 2008 identifies the prescribed limits for the assessment of microbiological quality of fresh, chilled, and frozen meat both locally produced and imported, based on several international standards (e.g., U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service). NMIS further refers to [DA Department Circular \(DC\) No. 9](#) issued in 2015 in terms microbiological testing criteria for mechanically separated meat. NMIS utilizes the limits indicated under MC 9 (2008) and DC 9 (2015) during the conduct of laboratory analysis, specifically to determine whether the meat sample is within the prescribed microbiological limits and can be released from the CSW.

Figure 1 provides the flow chart of NMIS' inspection procedure in handling an adverse food safety issue.

Figure 1. NMIS Procedure in Handling Food Safety Issue



Source: NMIS MC 5 (2023)

Attachments:

No Attachments.