



As far as the European Union is concerned food traceability through the supply chain is now a legal responsibility. This means that a supermarket must know where their pork products were manufactured and, in turn, the processor must be able to trace their pigs back to the farm.

Traceability also applies to pig feed. Food crises in the past have indicated that tracing feed by invoices is not detailed enough – tracings via delivery notes would ensure more efficient traceability.

Society today is very concerned about food safety. Not so long ago hundreds of farms in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands were quarantined as a consequence of receiving cancer causing dioxin contaminated animal feed. Several countries have consequently banned imports of pork from Belgium and the Netherlands.

In the UK we now have the Food Standards Agency which was set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000. At a recent international conference held in London, Anne Birgit Lundholt, former chief executive of Dansk Slagterier and now vice president of the International Meat Secretariat, told dele-

receiving penicillin found its way into the food chain.

This caused serious problems as some of this milk was drunk by people who were allergic to penicillin and ended up in anaphylactic shock.

Some of this milk was used for manufacturing cheese. Here again, the penicillin wreaked havoc as it neutralised bacteria and ruined large quantities of cheese.

The impetus for traceability in the UK started in the mid 1990s, in part due to public concerns about the inclusion of antibiotic growth promoters in pig feed. The Malton Code consisted of a series of requirements that producers had to meet in order that they could sell their pigs to a certain processor.

The processor, in turn, was then confident of the conditions under which pigs were reared when dealing with the major supermarkets. Farms were, and still are, audited by independent inspectors to ensure that standards are maintained to a satisfactory standard.

In the foreword to the Code, Max Hilliard, the former group managing director of Malton Foods stated, "One of the major reasons for our success is our commitment to building long term business partnerships with retailers and producers. The Malton Code is a good example of that need for partnership.

"The on farm audit measures standards and compliance, but we are dependent on the enforcement of management disciplines and good practice on every farm, every day by every producer to ensure that our supply chain to the consumer is not compromised at any time.

Only by working together in this way can we build the consumer confidence on which all partners in the UK pig industry depend."

The audit trail covered specifics such as origins of stock, movements of stock, sources of feedstuffs and the use of medicines. If the farmer was buying in feed then the name of the manufacturer and mill location had to be stated.

The medication of sick pigs is a very important aspect of traceability and the way in which pigs receiving medication were identified had to be stated – tagging, marker or spray. Free range egg production is more expensive than producing eggs from a battery system and egg prices generally reflect this.

A number of years ago a Yorkshire poultry company was importing battery eggs and then selling them on to supermarkets as free range.

This went on for some time but eventually the eggs were traced back and the company were taken to court and fined a substantial sum of money which put them out of business.



A finished, packed item with correct labelling.

Many consumers are not happy about GM feedstuffs and will pay to buy pork from pigs fed diets containing non GM ingredients and traceability can be used to check that feed compounders are actually using GM free ingredients in their diets.

The Martini Group in northern Italy has a very interesting operation developed in conjunction with a large supermarket chain. All the pig feed is made of of GM free ingredients.

All the pigs are identified individually at farm level. In the slaughter house cuts are placed in separately coded containers and individual product packs are bar coded so that in the event of a complaint it is possible to trace the pack right back to the farm and even to the individual pig.

Because of poor returns UK pig producers have started processing their own pigs and selling pork and sausages at farmers' markets.

These are usually held monthly and have been a huge success. In addition to boosting home production the key attraction is that consumers are happy because they are dealing with local farmers who are known in the community and can vouch for their produce.

Nothing seems to be simple these days. Traceability, some will argue, is just making life more complicated, but with all the bad press that food scares generate the pig producer has to be whiter than white and production has to be seen as being as transparent as possible.

Traceability is here to stay! ■



Packing food for the Martini Group. Note the coding on the metal tray.

gates that food safety was an increasingly important worldwide issue.

Even a small country like Albania is concerned with food safety. A new government was voted in last summer and the new Minister of Agriculture Jemin Gjani stated that a new law guaranteeing food safety was soon to be passed.

"Better labelling is needed plus funding for new laboratories for food testing is a major government priority," commented the new minister.

Some years ago there was a public outcry regarding the UK dairy industry.

Quantities of milk from cows which were