

tepav

türkiye ekonomi politikaları araştırma vakfı

**IF THERE IS WILL, OBSTACLES CAN BE OVERCOME: FOOD SAFETY,
VETERINARY AND PHYTOSANITARY POLICY CHAPTER HAS BEEN
OPENED AGAINST ALL THE ODDS.**

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Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy Chapter was opened to negotiations on June 30, 2010, the last day of the Spanish Presidency. This is the 13th chapter that has been opened since the beginning of the negotiations initiated on October 3, 2005. Although Spain, at the beginning of the EU Presidency in January stated that 3 to 4 chapters could be opened, only one chapter namely the Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy Chapter has been opened because of the level of technical preparations Turkey made, as was also underlined in the December 11, 2009 dated TEPAV Evaluation Note “How Do EU Decisions of December 2009 Summit Affect Turkey-EU Negotiation Process?”

Although this chapter was the only one that could be opened, that had completely technical opening criteria¹ and that ensured a number of advantages for Turkey such as improving the life quality of Turkish citizens and increasing the food exports of Turkey, the opening of it was hindered by problems first stemming from Turkey and then stemming from the EU. In this context, Turkey was faced with the risk that no chapter

¹ - “Turkey adopts the food, feed and veterinary framework legislation which complies with the EU *acquis* and makes provisions for a clear assignment of responsibilities, in particular for the controlling bodies”.

- “Turkey presents to the Commission a detailed strategy which will serve as a basis for transposition, implementation and enforcement of the EU *acquis*, including relevant international standards and World Organisation on Animal Health recommendations, for food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy. This strategy will include plans for the development of the relevant administrative and laboratory capacities and an estimation of financial resources required. It should also take into account the need to have the capacity to ensure cooperation with the EU in accordance with the *acquis*, in addressing risks in the animal health area.”
- “Turkey starts the implementation of an adequate system for identification and registration of caprine and ovine animals and demonstrates that appropriate measures have been taken to address the weaknesses of its animal identification and movement control system for bovine animals (related to the registration of holdings, recording of animals and their movements)”.
- “Turkey provides to the Commission detailed assessment of the internal movements of live animals, its registration of movement and control of slaughtering.”
- “The Thrace region in Turkey is recognised by the World Organisation on Animal Health (OIE) as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) free zone with vaccination.”
- “Turkey presents to the Commission a classification of all food establishments by category based on the EU *acquis* in view of a future National Programme for the upgrading of food establishments”.

would be opened during Spanish Presidency as was the case during Finland's EU Presidency in the second half of 2006.

Among the six opening criteria for the chapter, two were specifically emphasized by the EU: Turkey's adopting of the food, feed and veterinary framework regulation and eradication of the Thrace region from foot and mouth disease. The first problem at Turkey's side appeared during the process of eradicating the foot and mouth disease in the Thrace region: the disease was just being eliminated when the movements of animals during the Sacrifice Feast posed the risk of recurrence. After this problem was solved; there has been a significant delay in the enactment of the draft law on Veterinary Services, Phytosanitary, Food and Feed which was submitted to the National Assembly in February 2010.

It was expected that, since the law could be promulgated only in mid-June, the opinions of the European Commission and the EU member states could not be taken and the relevant chapter could not be opened in Spanish Presidency, i.e. before July. Spain and the European Commission made significant efforts to accelerate the intra-EU consultation process for the opening of the Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy Chapter.

On the other hand, as referred by TEPAV on June 24, 2010, Greek Cypriots stated that if European Parliament adopts the 'Direct Trade Regulation' and submits it to the EU Council of Ministers, they would block all the remaining negotiation chapters of Turkey and they would start with the "Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary" chapter.

Even though this obstacle was overcome by some EU countries, specifically Spain, then Germany and France tried to impose another opening criterion ("Turkey lifts restrictions on trade in beef meat, live bovine animals and derivate products"), that has nothing to do with the chapter in question and which is the opening criterion of the Agriculture and Rural Development chapter. This impediment was also overcome at the last moment on June 30, 2010 and the Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Policy Chapter has been opened.

As can be observed, if the relevant parties act responsibly and do their part during the accession negotiations – even in the last minute – impediments that once seem to be impassable at first sight can be eliminated. Nonetheless, it must also be noted that this attitude implies the seriousness of the deadlock of the accession negotiations process for Turkey and hence the Turkey-EU relations. The relations seem so fragile that even a technical problem such as not opening any chapter can represent itself as an unbearable challenge that should be tackled no matter what.