From steak to MSM: The many shades of grey in legal meat classifications

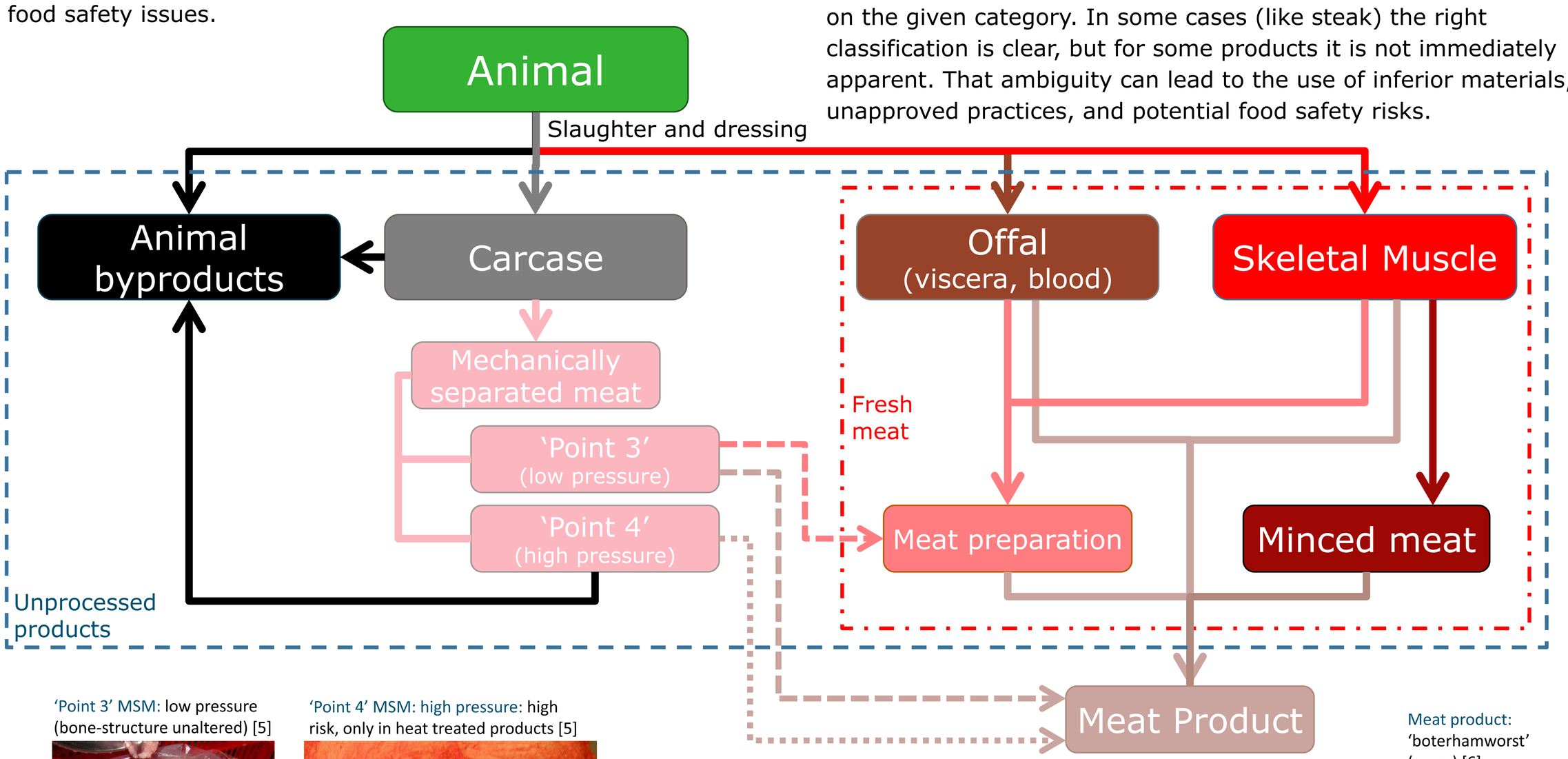
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Objective

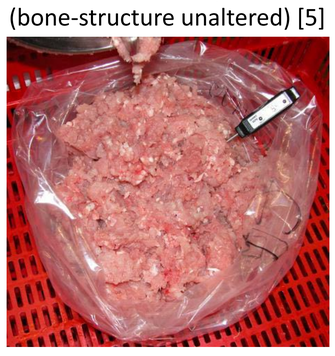
In this study, a legal framework for meat classifications is described. Legal ambiguity and possible overlap between classifications is identified. Research needs are indicated and policy options are suggested where this ambiguity may result in the potential for fraud or food safety issues.

Background

Meat can be classified according to various legal definitions, depending on the extent to which the material is processed. Market value of meat is highly variable and is largely influenced by how a product is classified. Different hygiene requirements apply depending on the given category. In some cases (like steak) the right classification is clear, but for some products it is not immediately apparent. That ambiguity can lead to the use of inferior materials, unapproved practices, and potential food safety risks.

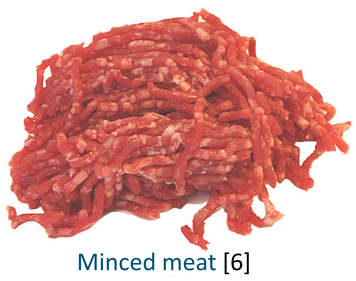


'Point 3' MSM: low pressure (bone-structure unaltered) [5]



'Point 4' MSM: high pressure: high risk, only in heat treated products [5]





Minced meat [6]



Meat preparation: steak with herbs and spices. [6]

Meat product: 'boterhamworst' (spam) [6]



Legal definitions

Meat product: "processed products resulting from the processing of meat or from the further processing of such processed products, so that the cut surface shows that the product no longer has the characteristics of fresh meat." [1]

Meat preparation: "fresh meat, including meat that has been reduced to fragments, which has had foodstuffs, seasonings or additives added to it or which has undergone processes insufficient to modify the internal muscle fibre structure of the meat and thus to eliminate the characteristics of fresh meat." [1]

Processing: "any action that substantially alters the initial product, including heating, smoking, curing, maturing, drying, marinating, extraction, extrusion or a combination of those processes" [2]

MSM: "the product obtained by removing meat from flesh-bearing bones after boning or from poultry carcases, using mechanical means resulting in the loss or modification of the muscle fibre structure." [1]

Main conclusions

Prep v. prod: muscle fibre structure "*substantially altered*" in meat products [2]. What does that mean?

- DG SANTE: "*completely eliminated*" [3]
- That interpretation not legally definite: CJEU decision required
- Complete elimination may not be practical: no indication that *zero tolerance* policy is required from safety perspective

MSM: point 3 MSM can look like minced meat, but may not be labelled as 'meat' [4]. Undeclared/unapproved presence difficult to establish.

References

[1] Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004, [2] Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004, [3] SANCO/10098/2009 Rev. 3, [4] Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011, [5] Petracci et al., 2012. Quality characteristics of ground poultry meat obtained using advanced trimming and mincing technology. Proceedings of the XXIV World's Poultry Congress, Salvador, 5-9 August 2012 [6] http://www.mijnslager.info/

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