

## **EU regrets U.S. request for WTO panel on treatment of poultry - Brussels, 8 October 2009**

**Following the request today by the United States for the establishment of a WTO panel to rule on EU hygiene legislation on the processing and sale of poultry, the European Commission spokesperson for trade, Lutz Güllner, issued the following statement:**

"We regret that the United States has decided to ask for a panel to be established in this case. We feel that litigation is not the most appropriate way to deal with complex issues such as this one. However, since the US has chosen this path, we will defend our food safety legislation, which does not discriminate against imported products."

### **Background**

The US is challenging EU rules on hygiene and marketing of poultry under which slaughterhouses can use only water or other approved substances to rinse meat products, in order to diminish their bacterial contamination ("antimicrobial treatment", or AMT). This rule applies to all meat products sold in the EC, irrespective of whether they are produced in the EC or they are imported. Products that meet EU standards can enter the EU market. This rule is part of wider EU legislation ensuring a high level of safety throughout the food chain, from farm to fork.

The US submitted requests for approval of certain substances used in the US for the cleaning of poultry carcasses (mainly substances based on chlorine), but the EU rejected the approval of these substances in 2008.

EU imports of poultry from the US have been marginal since 1997, when the EU removed from its list of authorised slaughterhouses several US establishments that were found not to be in line with EU hygiene requirements. The EU imported over 890,000 tons of poultry from third countries in 2008 (mainly from Brazil and Thailand).