

Field catering in the operational and training activities of the Carabinieri Corps

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Abstract

The Armed Force's victualling sector, and field catering, in particular, were brought up to date following Publication No. C-19, *Compendium of Logistic Provisions of the Carabinieri Force*. Previously, there was no specific regulation in the defense sector, except for the operational reality of military contingents deployed abroad. The aim of this discussion is the military field catering regulatory adaptation to the procedures of the Certified Notification of Commencement of Activities, pursuant to Law 241/90. To this end, the Ministry of Defense has adopted a specific notification model for its food businesses (Interministerial Decree 06/03/2020). Presidential Decree 327/1980 also applies in the

Arma with regard to refrigerated shelters intended for the storage of foodstuffs at a controlled temperature. The authorization, issued by the Veterinary Service of the Arma General Headquarters, is valid for 2 years and is renewable subject to verification of the specific requirements. The procedures to submit the certified activity start notice (SCIA) are functional for the type of service operation. The Veterinary Service issues a specific technical opinion on the relative hygiene and health requirements, while the plant-infrastructure part is assessed by the competent Directorate of Works of the Corps of Engineers of the aforementioned General Command. Failure to submit the SCIA is punishable under Legislative Decree No. 193/2007; however, if the conditions are met, recourse to the administrative institution of the warning is preferred. In the verification phase of the shelters in question, compliance with the regulations concerning the Agreement on the Transport of Perishable Goods must be ascertained. The new regulations allow the Armed Force to guarantee food safety in military operations involving the use of field modules for catering purposes.

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Introduction

The recent adoption of Publication No. C-19, *Compendium of logistic provisions of the Carabinieri Force* (General Command of the Carabinieri Corps, 2021), has brought the entire Armed Force (F.A.) catering sector up to date. In particular, reference is made to the regulatory and procedural framework inherent to field catering, which had previously never been regulated within the defense sector, except for the deployment of military contingents in foreign operating theaters (Defense General Staff - General Inspectorate of Military Health, 2014). This Directive improperly assimilates the activity of field catering to the trade of food products in public areas (Ministry of Health, 2002). According to the interpretation of the authors, and given the entry into force of the so-called hygiene package as of January 1, 2006, this assimilation is not legally tenable and is to be considered lapsed. In the Carabinieri Corps, camp catering is fully part of temporary catering activities; the competent food business operator (FBO) is required to submit regular health notification [through the certified activity start notice (SCIA)].

The aim of the present discussion is to carry out the regulatory adaptation of the military field catering to the SCIA procedures, pursuant to Law 241/90 (Italian Republic, 1990) and subsequent amendments and additions. To this end, the Ministry of Defense has also adopted a specific notification model for relevant food businesses (Ministry of Defense, 2020).

Historical background

Food logistics in the context of a military campaign require an efficient means and materials system to ensure full adherence to operational requirements (Botti, 1991, 1995; Romanoni, 2021).

These include:

- the “mod. 1855” pot, from French *marmite*, “false”: this vessel, closed by its own lid, conceals its contents. It can be counted in the category of pots (Terrone, 1982; Artesi, 2000);
- the “mod. 1897” (WEISS) wheeled ovens: made of iron arches, transported on wagons, and assembled when needed in the countryside. Although they ensured good adherence to troop movements, they required long downtimes for assembly, heating, firing, cooling, and disassembly. They came in 2 versions: one with 1800 bread rations on a 24-hour cycle, with continuous operation, which was transported on a battalion wagon; and a smaller packaged version, which provided 600 bread rations, also on a 24-hour cycle, using 8 mules (Chioni and Fiorentino, 2008; Cuzzi, 2015; Museo Alessandro Rocca, 2018);
- the animal-drawn roller kilns (WEISS): adopted in the Great War (instructions for their use were published in 1909) by both the Allies and the enemy troops (Austria above all). These were capable of partial operation even when the troops were marching on the front line over rough terrain (VV.AA., 1915). They were designed to cook 1200 rations per day (which could be duplicated in the event of a 24-hour fire) and were used until the Second World War (Biasiolo, 2015);
- mobile somatic field kitchens: the new mobile kitchens (of German origin), known as cooking chests, came into service in 1915. These ensured the preparation and transport of rations (SS.AA., 2015a). They ran on wood, were demountable, and could be dismantled. These cookers replaced the “mod. 1855” pots, which, however, continued to be used for preparing coffee and transporting water. They were also used by the platoons and were transported on the backs of 2 mules;
- rolling kitchens: they made their appearance during the Second World War (Nataloni *et al.*, 2016), although other armies (Russian and French) had already adopted their use in the Great War (1915-1918).

At the same time, the experience of the First World War sanctioned the disappearance of the cattle park (Chirico, 1931; Cionci, 2016). Herds of cattle accompanied the troops for slaughter in the field. They proved to be unsuitable for large armies and movement in the countryside. Moreover, slaughter in the vicinity of the troops entailed considerable health problems (Brunelli, 2000; Redaelli, 2002). Therefore, a switch was made to the consumption of frozen meat from the Americas (Zavarella, 2002). This required the creation and maintenance of an onerous cold chain, with the associated acquisition and adoption of refrigerated railway wagons and trucks (Montanari, 1982; Bargigia, 1993).

Regulatory references

Regulation 852/2004 (article 6) stipulates that “every food business operator shall notify the appropriate competent authority [...] any establishment under its control carrying out any of the stages of production, processing, and distribution of foodstuffs” (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2004). This Regulation, along with the regulations introduced by Legislative Decree 193/2007 (Italian Republic, 2007), has led to

the updating of Law 241/1990 (Italian Republic, 1990) on administrative procedure. First, the “*certified activity of start notice*” was introduced for food and beverage production and distribution activities, and then the SCIA (article 19) was introduced by Decree-Law No. 78 of May 31, 2010 (Italian Republic, 2010a).

The SCIA procedures were subsequently streamlined and standardized by the Madia Decrees on the simplification of administrative procedures. These introduced the single model of the notification form. In this regard, in agreement with the Minister for Public Administration, the Ministry of Defense also adopted a specific model (Ministry of Defense, 2020) for the notification of activities [ex article 6 of Reg. 852/2004 (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2004)] carried out within military facilities and premises. These include field catering.

In this context of adaptation to sector regulations, there is an expressed desire to maintain the sanitary authorization regime for cold stores. This is for adherence and specific supervision of the prescribed hygiene and health requirements, as well as verification of the accompanying documentation [agreement for the transport of perishable goods (ATP) certificate]. Therefore, in the Armed Forces, reference is made to article 44 of Presidential Decree no. 327/1980 (Italian Republic, 1980) concerning the “prior health authorization of vehicles used for land transport”. In particular, reference is made to letter “c” of said article concerning “vehicles used for the transport of fresh and frozen meat and fresh and frozen fishery products” (Italian Republic, 1980). In detail, as far as the Carabinieri Corps is concerned, this criterion is adopted for all refrigerated shelters, regardless of the temperature-controlled preservation regime (refrigeration/freezing-thawing) and the product category to which the foodstuffs stored therein belong.

The Regulation provides for this authorization to be issued by the Director/Head of the Veterinary Service. This is valid for 2 years and is renewable subject to verification of the maintenance of specific requirements, including, first and foremost, the ability to guarantee and maintain the required and necessary cold chain.

Field catering regulations in the Carabinieri Corps

The aforementioned circular Publication No. C-19 includes, in the case of the Carabinieri’s food companies, “temporary service canteens for operational and training requirements, regardless of the food force” (General Command of the Carabinieri Corps, 2021). These include kitchen and meal distribution shelters, for which it is provided that “the SCIA must be submitted at least 15 days before the start of the activity to allow a targeted inspection for the assessment of the specific risk factors” (General Command of the Carabinieri Corps, 2021).

In the case of a food and beverage production and administration activity employing military personnel (direct management), a specific manual of good hygienic practices must be drawn up. The training of service employees must be guaranteed, and a specific certificate must be issued. This certificate, which constitutes a sort of internal *curriculum vitae* of the Administration Defense must be recorded on the matricular card of each employee.

Definitions

Having established the concepts of food business and the type of conduct of the service of production and administration of food

and beverages in the food businesses of the Carabinieri Corps, it is essential to define the figure of the FBO who, in relation to the type of business conduct, is identified as the commander of the department concerned (in the case of direct management) or the owner/legal representative of the contractor (in the case of outsourced management).

The FBO is required to submit a SCIA, which constitutes proof of compliance with hygiene and health requirements, if: a food business activity is started (new opening or temporary activity), as in the present case; the type of production is changed; the ownership is changed; or the service provided is suspended or cessated. It follows that the procedures for submitting health notifications (explained below) will necessarily differ depending on the management regime of the food business.

The competent authority is the Veterinary Service of the Carabinieri General Command (CGA), for both the verification and supervision of the SCIA procedures and the activity of issuing the sanitary authorization for refrigerated shelters.

In particular, as far as the SCIA is concerned, the aforementioned Veterinary Service verifies the correctness and completeness of the documentation submitted, carries out inspections at the facility concerned, and issues a food business registration certificate to the department (only for food businesses with direct management). This has the right to proceed, at any time, to an official control on the subsistence of the declared requirements.

As far as the sanitary authorization is concerned, the aforementioned Veterinary Service verifies the correctness and completeness of the documentation submitted, carries out inspections at the shelter storage site, issues the authorization to the department, which is valid for 2 years, and proceeds, at any time, with checks on the subsistence of the declared requirements.

Before the regulatory adaptation to the provisions of Regulation 852/2004 (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2004), the hygienic and infrastructural suitability

of food industries operating at the F.A. was sanctioned by the issue of the sanitary authorization of the premises, pursuant to article 2 of Law 283/1962, subsequently repealed by the entry into force of Legislative Decree 193/2007 (Italian Republic, 1980).

Therefore, the period up to the adoption of the SCIA represented an *extra legem* condition, ensuring the effectiveness of the aforementioned authorization act within the premises of the Carabinieri Corps. Moreover, this regulatory specificity is grounded in the provisions of the Code of Military Order (Italian Republic, 2010b), which, by acknowledging the *sui generis* status of the Armed Forces, allows forms of derogation in the application of the legislation on public health and hygiene in the preparation and administration of food and beverages. The sanitary authorization, whose preparatory technical opinion was the result of the joint work of a special commission (1 medical officer, 1 veterinary officer, and 1 officer of the Genio speciality), was deliberated by the head of the logistic office of the top command of the organization to which the department of the Armed Forces concerned belonged. However, the procedure described did not apply to field catering, which, as mentioned above, was subject to the hygienic requirements provided for by the aforementioned Ministerial Order of April 3, 2002, as an activity similar to trading foodstuffs in public areas and valid only for out-of-area operations (Ministry of Health, 2002).

Procedures for submitting the certified activity start notice at Carabinieri food businesses

The submission procedures differ according to the type of service provision. They are represented in Figures 1 and 2. Concerning the case of direct management with the use of military personnel, the procedure is detailed in Figure 1.

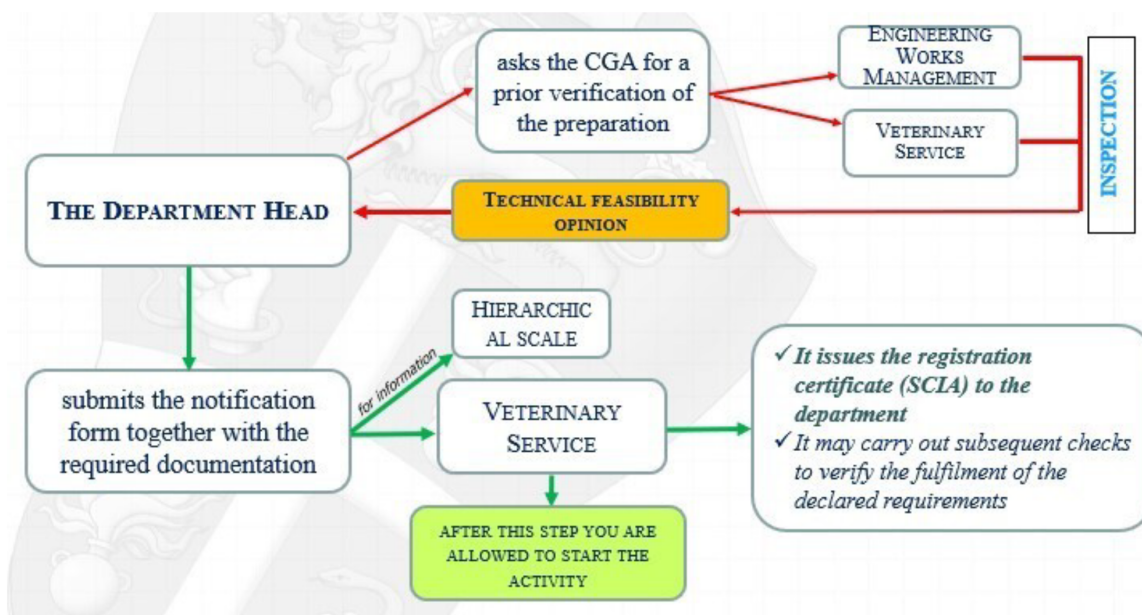


Figure 1. Case of direct management with the use of military personnel. CGA, Carabinieri General Command; SCIA, certified activity start notice.

It should be noted that when issuing the preventive opinion on the feasibility of the project relating to the food company in question, the Veterinary Service is only competent to issue the attestation on the hygiene-sanitary requirements of the premises and service. For the plant-infrastructure part, the opinion is the responsibility of the Engineer Works Department, ordinarily located within the IV Department of the CGA, reporting directly to the logistic inspector for the F.A.

The same division of responsibilities is also maintained for food and beverage processing and administration operations conducted under outsourced management, with the catering service entrusted to a contracting company. This procedure is illustrated in Figure 2.

In this second case, the submission of the health notification follows the classic procedure pursuant to article 19 of Law

241/1990, through the single desk for productive activities, which will transmit (via certified e-mail) the relevant documentation to the Veterinary Service.

Official control activities under the certified activity start notice

The FBO that carries out a food activity without having submitted the SCIA, or when a prohibition or suspension order is pending, is administratively sanctioned pursuant to article 6, paragraph 3, of Legislative Decree 193/2007 (Italian Republic, 2007).

The FBO must provide good hygiene practice manuals drawn up according to the principles of the hazard analysis and critical



Figure 2. Procedure in case of food and beverage processing and administration operations conducted under outsourced management. SCIA, certified activity start notice; OSA, food business operator; SUAP, single desk for productive activities; PEC, certified e-mail.

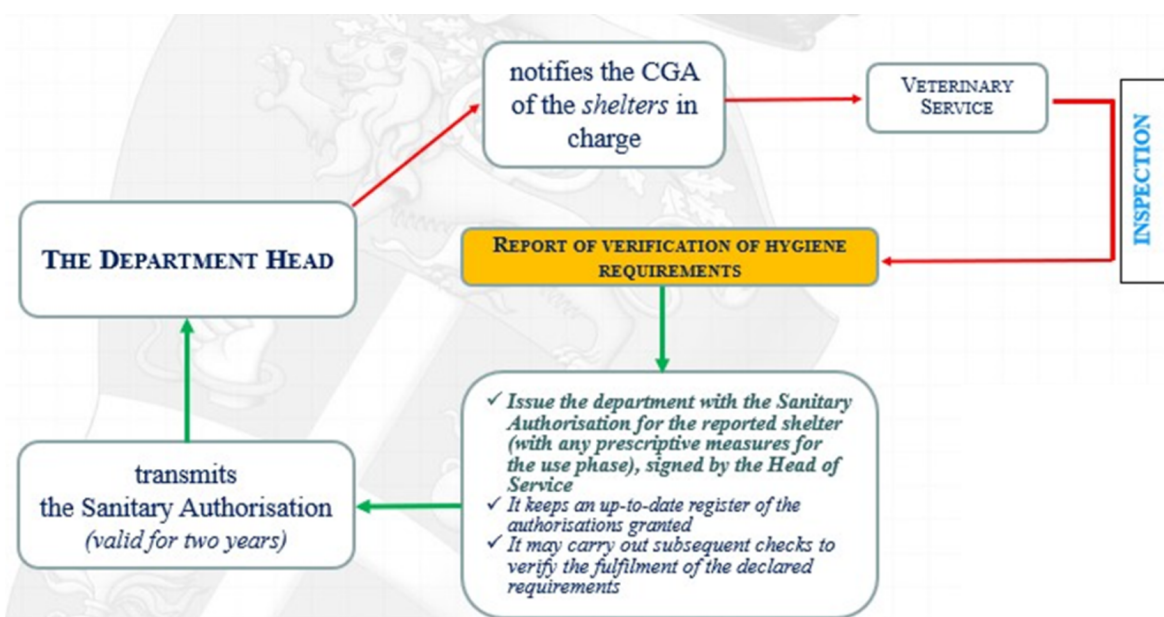


Figure 3. Procedures for issuing health authorization for refrigerated shelters. CGA, Carabinieri General Command.

control point method (article 5 of Regulation 852/2004) (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2004). In the case of field catering conducted under direct management, the competence lies with the Veterinary Service of the CGA.

In addition, the FBO must ensure specific food hygiene and safety training for the staff employed (annex II, chapter XII of Regulation 852/2004) (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2004). For field catering in direct management, this is ensured by the Veterinary Service.

Therefore, as anticipated, failure to submit the SCIA constitutes a violation that can be administratively sanctioned pursuant to Legislative Decree 193/2007 (Italian Republic, 2007); however, the use of the institution of the administrative warning is favored, in line with the need for progressive regulatory compliance on the part of the F.A. and with a concomitant tolerance approach towards catering contractors. The scope of this warning has been extended to include violations of food safety regulations for which an administrative fine is provided (Law 71/2021) (Italian Republic, 2021a).

In this regard, the control body in charge, in the event that it ascertains the existence of violations that can be corrected for the first time, warns the FBO concerned to comply with the violated requirements within 30 days from the notification of the warning and to eliminate the harmful and/or dangerous consequences of the administrative offense. In the event of failure to comply with the prescriptions contained in the warning within the deadline indicated, the control body will issue a fine pursuant to Law 689/1981 (article 14) (Italian Republic, 1981). The terms granted for complying with the warning have a suspensive nature compared to those provided for the notification of the sanction relating to the violation ascertained.

Procedures for issuing health authorization for refrigerated shelters

The procedure in question is represented in Figure 3, with the exclusive involvement of the Veterinary Service of the CGA, both for the assessment of the relevant sanitary requirements of the vehicles (SS.AA., 2004; SS.AA., 2018) and for the subsequent issuing of the specific authorization document.

The hygienic requirements of the refrigerated shelters are those provided for in articles 48 and 49 of Presidential Decree No. 327/1980 (Italian Republic, 2007), schematically shown in Table 1,

used as an integral part of the certificate of suitability based on which the authorization in question is issued.

In the document verification phase, the presence of a valid ATP certificate is also assessed (SS.AA., 2015b). The ATP is the result of a protocol on the international transport of perishable foodstuffs and the relative means to be used for a specific purpose. The document was signed in Geneva on September 1, 1970, by several adhering states; in Italy, it came into force on November 21, 1976, and Legislative Decree 285 of April 30, 1992, identifies the current regulatory framework (Italian Republic, 1992).

The ATP standard prescribes the types of perishable foodstuffs to be transported under controlled temperature conditions and the specific temperature at which chilled and frozen foodstuffs must be transported, depending on the relevant product category.

Since 1984, in Italy, the issuing of this certificate has been entrusted to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, which is responsible for the technical inspection of vehicles, through the offices of the civil motorization and appropriately authorized private test centers.

The overall duration of the ATP certificate is 15 years, starting from the date of issue. This period is not continuous but is interspersed with periodic inspections to certify that the conditions of efficiency of the thermoregulation system are maintained. Concerning isothermal vans, the initial certificate is valid for 6 years, with 3 subsequent renewals, each lasting 3 years. Failure to comply with the rules set out in the ATP regulation entails the application of the common administrative penalties provided for by the Highway Code, such as in the case of failure to exhibit due to theft or loss (ex article 180, non-renewal and/or transport with untested vehicles, and ex article 216 of the Highway Code).

The Veterinary Service of the CGA updates the *Chronological Register of Sanitary Authorisations for Refrigerated Shelters*, proceeding to the renewal of the authorization, subject to the necessary verification of the aforementioned requirements as the natural expiry date approaches.

Conclusions

Therefore, the adoption of the model set out above has enabled the evolution of authorization procedures concerning facilities, equipment, and services related to field catering in both operational and training activities of the Carabinieri Corps, in national territory and foreign operational theaters. The consolidation over

Table 1. Requirement check-list.

Requirements	Present		Efficient	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Interior walls made of corrosion-resistant material, smooth, easy to clean and disinfect with rounded corners				
Presence of suspension devices				
Airtight doors/doors with suitable sealing gaskets				
Water collection devices				
Loading and unloading connections easily removable so as to allow easy cleaning and disinfection				
Cold generating apparatus with automatic and manual operation capable of ensuring the expected transport temperatures				
External device to allow control of the internal temperature (°C)				
External thermograph recording indoor temperature (°C)				
Presence of non-removable mark bearing the details of the certificate of eligibility				
Chiller/freezer malfunction alarm systems				

time of the process will lead to the full implementation of the health notification regime introduced by the so-called hygiene package, as well as to the possibility of undertaking the prescriptive and sanctioning regimes identifiable in Legislative Decree 193/2007 (Italian Republic, 2007), through the traditional path offered by Law 689/1981 (Italian Republic, 1981), or by resorting to the renewed instrument of the warning in the field of food safety, within the scope of the specific official control activities (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2017; Italian Republic, 2021b).

The maintenance of the sanitary authorization for refrigerated shelters also represents the will to manage a specific and special control regime for these vehicles to assess their efficiency and full functionality periodically (at least every 2 years). This, without exempting itself from the broader context of the procedures related to the SCIA requirement, which are a *condicio sine qua non* for the start-up of military catering activities in camp contexts.

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