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E.Coli outbreak : laboratory confirmation of contamination source is major breakthrough, says Commissioner John Dalli

An announcement made this afternoon by the German authorities confirms the fact that various types of sprouts produced by one farm south of the city of Hamburg are responsible for the E. coli outbreak in Germany.

John Dalli, Commissioner in charge of Health and Consumer Policy, said: "I welcome this extremely important development : the source of contamination is now identified and the epidemiological findings are backed by laboratory results. EU consumers and trade partners shall now have full confidence as regards the safety of EU's vegetables".

Commissioner Dalli concluded : "As I have already stated the Commission will – along with Member States – draw lessons from this crisis which will lead to a further solidification of our alert and response systems".

Epidemiological investigations will continue in order to complete the picture of the links between people who fell ill, food establishments and the farm in Germany. In the next few days investigations will also focus on how the specific E. coli strain (O104) got into the food chain.

Meanwhile, the Commission services have been working hard to implement the political agreement reached yesterday at the Russia-EU summit in Nizhny Novgorod between European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The agreement provided for the lifting of the Russian ban on EU vegetable imports and the introduction of a certification system.

The moment the agreement was struck, the European Commission services forwarded a concrete proposal to the Russian competent authorities.

Given today's new development, the Commission is now looking forward to a swift examination of this proposal by the Russian authorities so that exports of EU products shall resume as soon as possible.

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