

RAPID ALERT SYSTEM FOR FOOD AND FEED

The legal basis of the system is Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (O.J. No L 31 of 1 February 2002).

The purpose of the rapid alert system for food and feed (RASFF) is to provide the control authorities with an effective tool for exchange of information on measures taken to ensure food safety.

To assist the members of the network, notifications are classified under three different headings¹:

- **ALERT NOTIFICATIONS**

Alert notifications are sent when a food or feed presenting a serious risk is on the market and when immediate action is required. Alerts are triggered by the Member State that detects the problem and has initiated the relevant measures, such as withdrawal/recall. The notification aims at giving all the members of the network the information to verify whether the concerned product is on their market, so that they also can take the necessary measures.

Consumers can be reassured that products subject to an alert notification have been withdrawn or are in the process of being withdrawn from the market. The Member States have their own mechanisms to carry out such actions, including the provision of detailed information through the media if necessary.

- **INFORMATION NOTIFICATIONS**

Information notifications concern a food or feed that was placed on the market for which a risk has been identified, but for which the other members of the network do not have to take immediate action, because the product has not reached their market or is no longer present on their market or because the nature of the risk does not require any immediate action.

- **BORDER REJECTIONS**

These notifications concern food and feed consignments that have been tested and rejected at the external borders of the EU (and the EEA²) when a health risk was found. The notifications are transmitted to all EEA border posts in order to reinforce controls and to ensure that the rejected product does not re-enter the Community through another border post.

The Commission publishes a weekly overview of RASFF notifications belonging to the above three categories. As it is necessary to strike the balance between openness and the protection of commercial information, the trade names and the identity of individual companies are not published. This is not detrimental to consumer protection, as a RASFF notification implies that all required measures have been or are in the process of being taken.

The public must be aware that the Commission is not in a position to release more information other than that published here. However, in exceptional circumstances where the protection of human health

¹ This classification was put in place on 1 January 2008 and differs from the classification used until then.

² European Economic Area

requires greater transparency, the Commission takes the appropriate action through its usual communication channels.

The Commission informs the authorities of third countries of notifications concerning products manufactured in, distributed to or dispatched from these countries. However, the fact that a country is mentioned as the origin of a product does not necessarily imply that the identified hazard(s) originated in the country concerned.

The notifications reported in the weekly overviews published on the European Commission's web site are so-called "original notifications", representing a new case reported on a health risk detected in one or more consignments of a food or feed. On these cases, control authorities are exchanging additional information on measures taken and outcome of investigations. This additional information does not appear in the publicly accessible weekly overviews.

A short explanation about some of the notification tables' columns follows.

The "notification basis" column, appearing in the alert and information notifications tables, indicates what type of control, report or investigation lay at the basis of the notification:

- border control – screening sample: notification initiated through a sample taken at a border post for analysis but the consignment was meanwhile released to the market (“screening sample”);
- official control on the market: official control on the EU (and EEA) internal market;
- company own-check: notification initiated through a company notifying the outcome of an own-check to the competent authority;
- consumer complaint: notification initiated through a consumer lodging a complaint with the competent authority;
- food poisoning outbreak: reports of a food poisoning leading to the notification of a risk in a food on the market that has caused the food poisoning.

The status column is a combination of two values, "distribution status" and "action (to be) taken".

The distribution status indicates knowledge existing **at the time of notification** about the possible distribution of the product on the market. The concept "market" is to be interpreted in a geographical way: "the internal Community market" i.e. this does not necessarily mean that the product is already on the shelves available to consumers, as often it is not.

The action (to be) taken represents the action already taken or to be taken by the notifying country **at the time of notification**. If "no action taken" is given for an **alert** notification, this normally indicates that the product is not on the market of the notifying country (therefore: no action taken by the notifying country) but it may be on the market of other member countries.

Week 2009/1

TABLE 1: ALERT NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications in blue typeface concern feed, all other notifications concern food.

DATE	NOTIFIED BY	REF.	REASON FOR NOTIFYING	NOTIFICATION BASIS	STATUS
30/12/2008	Slovenia	2008.1700	traces of milk ingredient (casein: > 102.4 mg/kg - ppm) in chocolate biscuits from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	border control - consignment released	distribution on the market (possible) / product (to be) relabelled
31/12/2008	the United Kingdom	2008.1708	Listeria monocytogenes (100 CFU/g) in blue Stilton cheese from the United Kingdom	company's own check	distribution on the market (possible)
31/12/2008	France	2008.1709	Listeria monocytogenes (100; 160 CFU/g) in salami from France	company's own check	distribution on the market (possible) / product (to be) withdrawn from the market
02/01/2009	Italy	2009.0001	mercury (3.01 mg/kg - ppm) in smoked swordfish from Denmark	official control following RASFF notification	distribution on the market (possible) / product (to be) recalled from consumers

TABLE 2: INFORMATION NOTIFICATIONS

Notifications in blue typeface concern feed, all other notifications concern food.

DATE	NOTIFIED BY	REF.	REASON FOR NOTIFYING	NOTIFICATION BASIS	STATUS
29/12/2008	Germany	2008.1698	unauthorised genetically modified (Bt 63) fine rice vermicelli from China	official control on the market	distribution restricted to notifying country / product (to be) withdrawn from recipient(s)
29/12/2008	Germany	2008.1699	E 210 - benzoic acid unauthorised and unauthorised use of colour E 123 - amaranth in mixed flavour fruit jelly from Vietnam	official control on the market	distribution on the market (possible) / product (to be) withdrawn from the market
30/12/2008	Austria	2008.1701	amitraz (0.475 mg/kg - ppm) in fresh pears from Turkey, via Germany	official control on the market	product already consumed / no action taken
30/12/2008	Austria	2008.1702	amitraz (0.311 mg/kg - ppm) in fresh pears Santa Maria from Turkey, via Germany	official control on the market	product already consumed / no action taken

DATE	NOTIFIED BY	REF.	REASON FOR NOTIFYING	NOTIFICATION BASIS	STATUS
30/12/2008	Italy	2008.1703	illegal import of canned pork and beans from the Philippines	official control on the market	information on distribution not (yet) available / product (to be) seized
30/12/2008	Italy	2008.1704	illegal import of canned pork and beef livers' pate from the Philippines	official control on the market	information on distribution not (yet) available / product (to be) seized
30/12/2008	Austria	2008.1705	amitraz (0.307 mg/kg - ppm) in fresh pears Santa Maria from Turkey	official control on the market	product already consumed / no action taken
30/12/2008	Sweden	2008.1706	Salmonella in fresh pig meat from Germany	company's own check	distribution restricted to notifying country / product (to be) withdrawn from the market
30/12/2008	Germany	2008.1707	unauthorised genetically modified (MIR604 maize) dry dog food from the United States	border control - consignment released	distribution on the market (possible) / destination of the product identified
31/12/2008	France	2008.1710	cadmium (1.37 mg/kg - ppm) in frozen whole cleaned octopus (<i>Octopus membranaceus</i>) from India	border control - consignment released	distribution restricted to notifying country / product (to be) withdrawn from the market
02/01/2009	Lithuania	2009.0002	<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i> (presence /25g) and <i>Salmonella</i> (presence /25g) in chilled turkey wings and necks from Poland	official control on the market	distribution on the market (possible) / product (to be) withdrawn from the market
02/01/2009	Lithuania	2009.0003	parasitic infestation with nematodes (<i>Philometra</i> spp.) and with larvae of trematodes of frozen northern pike (<i>Esox lucius</i>) and pike perch (<i>Stizostedion lucioperca</i>) fillets from the Russian Federation	border control - consignment released	distribution on the market (possible) / destination of the product identified

TABLE 3: BORDER REJECTIONS

Notifications in blue typeface concern feed, all other notifications concern food.

DATE	NOTIFIED BY	REF.	REASON FOR NOTIFYING	ACTION (TO BE) TAKEN
02/01/2009	Belgium	2009.AAA	prohibited substance nitrofuran (metabolite) nitrofurazone (SEM) (> MRPL) in frozen shrimps (<i>Macrobrachium rosenbergii</i>) from Bangladesh	product (to be) re-dispatched
02/01/2009	the Netherlands	2009.AAB	parasitic infestation of frozen frogs' legs from Indonesia	product (to be) re-dispatched
02/01/2009	the United Kingdom	2009.AAC	bad hygienic state of frozen fish from Brazil	product (to be) destroyed
02/01/2009	the United Kingdom	2009.AAD	bad hygienic state of frozen chicken popcorn and chicken zinger from Thailand	product (to be) destroyed
02/01/2009	Poland	2009.AAE	bad temperature control - rupture of the cold chain - of frozen white meat <i>Pangasius hypophthalmus</i> fillets from Vietnam	product (to be) destroyed
02/01/2009	Poland	2009.AAF	unauthorised establishment for frozen Alaska pollock fillets (<i>Teragra chalcogramma</i>) from China	product (to be) re-dispatched
02/01/2009	Poland	2009.AAG	unauthorised establishment for frozen Alaska pollock fillets (<i>Teragra chalcogramma</i>) from China	product (to be) re-dispatched
02/01/2009	Spain	2009.AAH	bad hygienic state of frozen fish from Mauritania	product (to be) re-dispatched
02/01/2009	Spain	2009.AAI	aflatoxins (B1 = 2.56 µg/kg - ppb) in almonds from the United States	product (to be) re-dispatched
02/01/2009	Spain	2009.AAJ	aflatoxins (B1 = 3.5; Tot. = 3.5 µg/kg - ppb) in almonds from the United States	product (to be) re-dispatched