Subject: Illegal use of nitrofurans in poultry farms in Portugal

The Portuguese authorities presented a new update of the situation following the discovery of illegal use of nitrofurans in poultry farms in Portugal and distributed a progress report.

The Portuguese authorities are continuing to implement their action plan. Following positive results from residues control, a second round of testing is being undertaken on drinking water, feed and animals of the relevant farms. When positivity is confirmed, the animals on the farm are slaughtered and destroyed. On 18 March, the situation is as follows: 12 farms have been confirmed positive, 9 are negative and 34 remain under restriction (of which 19 were empty and could not be tested in the second round).

In addition, a wide monitoring of poultry farms is being undertaken. As a first step, the authorities are sampling and testing the 227 poultry farms which represent 70% of the total Portuguese production. Sampling has been completed for 197 poultry farms.

15/25 pig farms and 9/29 rabbit farms have also been sampled.

In order to identify the possible source of this contamination, the Portuguese authorities have collected 276 samples from feed producing plants, exceeding the foresaw figure of 155 samples. Furalta done was found in large quantities at two wholesalers of pharmaceutical products and one home-mixer.

The samples have been sent to official laboratories in other M and results are expected soon. The Commission thanked the Member States for this assistance.

The Portuguese delegation informed on the measures taken on 16 March 2003 with regard to the recall of products in the food chain. This overall recall of poultry meat from Portugal frozen before 14 March 2003 has been notified through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed.

Although the recall concerns all frozen poultry, which can be easily identified by its health mark, several Member States requested the Portuguese delegation to make available the distribution list, in order to be able to locate the products and retrieve them from the food chain. The Committee also wished to receive the analytical results for poultry and feed as soon as they became available.

As regards live animals, Portugal confirmed that 1 day-old chicks were sent to Spain, which excludes that they could have been contaminated.

The Portuguese authorities will continue to report in writing on an on-going basis through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed. The issue will be reviewed at the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health of 25 March 2003.
The Commission will maintain constant contact with the Portuguese competent authorities to keep the situation under review.

All Member States which have not yet done so will provide their results of nitrofuran residue monitoring at the latest by 31 March 2003, indicating also the method used.