

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH

Meeting of 10 March 2003

Subject : Illegal use of nitrofurans in poultry farms in Portugal

The Portuguese authorities presented an up-date of the situation following the discovery of illegal use of nitrofurans in poultry farms in Portugal.

An action plan has been developed by the Portuguese authorities and circulated to the Commission and all other Member States. Following positive results from residues control, 47 poultry farms have been blocked. A second round of testing on these farms is being undertaken on drinking water, feed and animals. When positivity is confirmed, the animals on the farm are slaughtered and destroyed and products already on the market are recalled. The Portuguese authorities make the names of these farms immediately available to the public.

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. Given the assistance offered to Portugal by some official laboratories across the European Union, the results from these farms will begin to be available within one week. If any of these farms are found positive, the same approach as above will be followed.

In order to identify the possible source of this contamination, the Portuguese authorities will carry out sampling and testing in 155 feed producing plants and will inspect distributors of veterinary medicinal products and premixes.

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 on 18 March 2003.

The Commission will be in constant contact with the Portuguese competent authorities to keep the situation under review.

The Commission reiterated its request that all the Member States include in their residue monitoring plan for 2003 reinforced testing of nitrofurans in poultry, pigs, rabbits and aquaculture, using a method which has the minimum required performance limit of 1 µg/kg for nitrofurans metabolites. The residue monitoring plans should be transmitted to the Commission by the legal deadline of 31 March 2003 set in Directive 96/23/EC.

11 March 2003