

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE FOOD CHAIN AND ANIMAL HEALTH

Brussels, 10 December 2008

President : Mr Eric Pondelet

All Member States were present, except Slovenia.

During the meeting of the Working Party of the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO), held on 10 December 2008, extensive discussions took place as regards the recent dioxin contamination in Ireland affecting 10 pig farms and 38 cattle farms in Ireland and some farms in UK (Northern Ireland).

Given that it was not possible to trace back pig meat to the farms, the Irish authorities decided on Saturday 6 December a total recall of all Irish pig meat and pig meat products produced after 1 September 2008.

The 28 beef farms (no dairy farms affected) were blocked pending analysis to check possible contamination. Analytical results on non-dioxin-like PCBs of 11 farms are already available and showed that 3 out of 11 farms showed unacceptable levels of non-dioxin-like PCBs. These three farms continue to be blocked and animals from these farms slaughtered after 1 September are traced and will be withdrawn from the market.

The UK delegation informed that the affected farms in Northern Ireland are not pig farms but cattle farms. These farms are blocked pending analysis to check possible contamination.

A representative from EFSA presented in detail the conclusions of the EFSA statement on the risks for public health due to the presence of dioxins in pork from Ireland, issued on 10 December 2008. Delegations appreciated the thorough assessment done by EFSA performed in a very short period of time.

All delegations recognised, following the conclusions of the EFSA statement, the need for a harmonised enforcement approach across the EU following this contamination incident and the importance to agree on this without delay.

Given the urgency of the situation, a meeting of the Standing Committee was immediately held, taking the opportunity of the presence of the CVOs in the Working Party, to discuss and agree guidelines for measures to be taken following the dioxin contamination incident in Ireland.

The enclosed guidelines were accepted and agreed by a large consensus of the delegations. Three Member States expressed a reservation. All other Member States agreed and accepted the enclosed guidelines.

Eric Poudelet,
Director (signed)

Enclosure : 1

Standing Committee of the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH).
10 December 2008

Guidelines as regards measures to be taken following the dioxin incident in Ireland

The SCoFCAH had an exchange of views on the alert notification launched by the Irish authorities on 6 December as regards dioxins in pig meat from Ireland (RASFF 2008.1584).

Based on the statement from EFSA¹ and the information provided by the delegation of Ireland and affected Member States, the SCoFCAH has considered the following risk management measures, ensuring a high level of consumer protection in the European Union and third countries:

- 1) pig meat from Ireland, produced from 1 September 2008 until 6 December 2008 should be withdrawn from the market and safely disposed of.
- 2) both composite food products², such as pizza, sandwich, meat sauces, etc., and meat products containing Irish pig meat and fat with a total percentage up to 20 %³ should be excluded from the withdrawal.
- 3) both composite products and meat products containing Irish pig meat and fat with a total percentage above 20 % should be withdrawn from the market and detained. A representative sample should be taken and only if an analytical test⁴ shows compliance with the EU dioxin legislation⁵, these products can be put on the market again. In case of non-testing or non-compliant result, the products should be safely disposed of.

As regards cattle products, the Irish and UK (for Northern Ireland) authorities shall provide further information to the RASFF on the possible contamination. Member States should take action based on the information distributed through RASFF.

¹ Statement of EFSA on the risks for public health due to the presence of dioxins in pork from Ireland, issued on 10 December 2008
Available at: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/cs/BlobServer/Statement/contam_ej_911_dioxins.pdf?ssbinary=true

² composite product: a foodstuff intended for human consumption that contains both processed products of animal origin and products of plant origin (Commission Decision 2007/275/EC)

³ EFSA concluded "*In a more likely scenario with a daily consumption of 10% contaminated Irish pork for a mean consumer of pork fat for the respective period of the incidence (90 days), at the highest recorded concentration of dioxins (200 pg WHO-TEQ/g fat), the body burden would increase by approximately 10% EFSA considers this increase in body burden of no concern for this single event.*" Given that the 200 pg is the highest recorded concentration and that the average of the contaminated meat is more likely around 100 pg, the threshold of 20 % can be considered to be in line with this conclusion.

⁴ sampling and analysis have to be performed in accordance with the provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) 1883/2006 of 19 December 2006 laying down methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of levels of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in certain foodstuffs (OJ L 364, 20.12.2006, p. 32)

⁵ Commission Regulation (EC) No 1881/2006 of 19 December 2006 setting maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs. (OJ L 364, 20.12.2006, p.5)

