



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Deputy Director General

**SANCO**

08. 12. 2008

Brussels,  
DG SANCO/E3/FV/ci/D420434

**Subject: Request for urgent scientific and technical assistance on the risks for public health due to the contamination by dioxins in pig meat from Ireland.**

Dear Ms Geslain-Lanéelle,

During routine monitoring by the Irish authorities of the food chain for a range of contaminants, elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were found in pig meat. As these PCB levels might be an indicator for unacceptable dioxin contamination, further investigations were immediately started to determine the dioxin content and to identify the possible source of contamination.

The use of contaminated animal feed was identified to be the source. Preliminary evidence indicates that the contamination problem is likely to have started in September 2008. All possibly contaminated feed has been blocked.

The contaminated feed was provided to 10 pig farms which are producing about 6-7 % of the total supply of pigs in Ireland. Pigs from these farms were after slaughter processed by meat processing plants which are responsible for about 80 % of the total supply of pig meat and pig meat products from Ireland.

High levels of dioxins (about 100 times the legal maximum limit) are found in pig meat and pig meat products produced in Ireland.

Given the high levels found and that it is not possible to trace back the Irish pig meat and pig meat products to the farms affected by the dioxin contamination incident, the Irish authorities decided on Saturday 6 December 2008 to recall as a precautionary measure from the market all pig products produced from pigs slaughtered in Ireland, even if not more than 10 % of the Irish pig meat production is affected by the contamination incident. Distribution details of possibly contaminated pig meat and pig meat products to other Member States and third countries have been provided to the Member States and third countries involved through the Rapid Alert System for Feed and Food (RASFF).

Ms Geslain-Lanéelle  
Executive Director  
European Food Safety Authority  
Largo N.Palli, 5A  
I-43100 Parma  
Italy

The Commission is closely following up this contamination incident and the actions taken to withdraw any potentially contaminated pig meat and pig meat products from the market ensuring consumer health protection.

Therefore, in accordance with Article 31 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, the European Commission asks the European Food Safety Authority to provide by **9 December 2008** scientific assistance on the risks for human health related to the possible presence of dioxins in pig meat and pig meat products from Ireland and the presence of possibly contaminated processed pig meat products from Ireland in composite foods. All information available to the Commission on this contamination incident will be provided to EFSA directly to the colleague responsible for this request.

My services remain at your disposal for further information. On this matter, you can contact Mr Frans Verstraete and Mrs Marina Marini, who is the relevant contact point in the unit in charge of relations with EFSA. Their respective phone and e-mail addresses are indicated below

Yours sincerely,



Paola Testori Coggi

Contact persons: Mr F. Verstraete (02-295.63.59) [frans.verstraete@ec.europa.eu](mailto:frans.verstraete@ec.europa.eu).  
Mrs M. Marini (02-299.33.07) [marina.marini@ec.europa.eu](mailto:marina.marini@ec.europa.eu)

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