



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Acting Deputy Director General

SANCO

20.04.2010



Brussels,  
SANCO.E3/FV/md D(2010) 530330

**Subject: Request for urgent scientific and technical assistance on the possible risks for public and animal health of the contamination of the feed and food chain due to possible ash fall following the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland**

Dear Ms Geslain-Lanéelle,

The eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland resulted in an enormous ash cloud coming over Europe. Volcanic ash is made up of tiny pieces of glassy sand and dust produced when explosive eruptions demolish solid rock or spray lava into the sky, where it solidifies before falling.

As regards the possible direct public health effects in case of an ash fall (by inhalation of the particulates or contact with skin, eyes,...), ECDC in collaboration with WHO-Europe and JRC is closely following up the situation.

Taking into account the chemical composition of the ashes, questions could be raised on potential contamination of the food and feed chain and the related risks for public and animal health. In particular the presence of significant levels of fluorine in the ash could potentially affect the health of animals in case of ash fall.

Therefore, in accordance with Article 31 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, the European Commission asks the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to provide by **22 April 2010** scientific assistance on the possible risks for public and animal health via food, including drinking water and feed in case of a significant ash fall, based on the chemical composition of volcanic ash. In addition, the European Commission requests advice on the effectiveness of possible mitigation measures such as e.g. washing of fruits and vegetables before consumption.

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

My services remain at your disposal for further information. On this matter, you can contact Mr Frans Verstraete or 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,

Bernard Van Goethem

Contact: Mr F. Verstraete (02-295.63.59) [frans.verstraete@ec.europa.eu](mailto:frans.verstraete@ec.europa.eu).  
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