

WHO disagrees with EFSA draft on sugar and obesity

WHO accuses EFSA of ignoring and dismissing evidence that sugar is linked to obesity in its comments on the draft EFSA Opinion on diet reference values for carbohydrates and sugar.

Referring to the August 2009 EFSA draft, WHO says that “the section on sugars gives most cause for concern.” The EFSA draft Opinion made no recommendation on how much sugar people should eat and did not differentiate between natural sugars and added sugars (*EU Food Law* 21 August, 2009).

EFSA adopted a final Opinion in December last year which will be published possibly later this month and it is not known if the NDA panel, responsible for these reference values, changed the draft in the light of the WHO comments.

WHO says that the section on sugar “disregards all the evidence and the outcomes of scientific work” including the 2002 WHO/FAO Expert consultation on diet, nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases and the 2007 FAO/WHO Scientific update on human nutrition as well as the very recent report from the American Heart Association, 2009, which “particularly emphasises the contribution of sugar sweetened beverages to the increased risk of obesity.”

WHO says that although the EFSA draft quotes some evidence on sugar, that it then goes on to dismiss that evidence. The draft cites Malik (2006) as saying that “cross sectional studies and well powered prospective cohort studies with long periods of follow up show a positive association between higher intakes of sugar sweetened beverages and weight gain and obesity in both children and adults” and it cites Vatanian’s 2007 systematic review which concludes: “We found clear associations of soft drink intake with increased energy intake and body weight” and

“Recommendations to reduce population soft drink consumption are strongly supported by the available science.” WHO criticises the NDA panel for choosing to “dismiss all the evidence, saying that data are insufficient.”

WHO also says in its comments that EFSA is dismissive of an effect of sugars on energy density and the use of energy density for the risk of obesity. WHO highlights the “2nd World Cancer Research Fund’s report on “Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer” saying this is “the most systematic review of its kind” and that it identified energy density as an important determinant of obesity.” WHO says that the fact that in cross sectional studies, intake of sugars is not a determinant of energy density of the diet does not preclude the contribution that a high content of sugars may make to the energy density of increasingly consumed manufactured and prepared foods.”

Metabolic effects

WHO says furthermore that the draft Opinion does not adequately take account of the potential adverse metabolic effects of sugars, especially fructose, in those with metabolic syndrome. Given the high frequency of metabolic syndrome in European populations, this is an important consideration, it says.

WHO also attacks the EFSA proposed recommendations on fibre and sugar for being incompatible with current guidelines on the nutritional management and prevention of diabetes, published by the EASD Group (Mann JI, De Leeuw I, Herman sen K et al.)

On damage to teeth, WHO says that controlling sugar intake is the best way to reduce caries and is highly critical of EFSA’s conclusion that “cariogenic carbohydrate exposure is modified by various other lifestyle factors (oral hygiene,

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exposure to fluoride, meal frequency and diet composition), heredity, illness, medication, malnutrition, and flow and composition of saliva.” WHO strongly disagrees with the EFSA draft and says that “the arguments here are overwhelmingly in support of limiting the frequency of sugary food intakes.”

WHO also takes issue with the definition of fibre used because the EU definition is different to the Codex definition, which excludes oligosaccharides.

Overall, it finds the approach by EFSA to be sound and logical but it calls for more comprehensive advice on implementation, monitoring and evaluation. WHO says social marketing is essential for implementation.

EFSA’s work on sugar is controversial because one of the panel members, who was still a member when the sugar Opinion was adopted though his name does not appear on the draft, undertook a review for the sugar industry but did not declare an interest. Andreu Palou chaired a sugar industry funded review which disputed that sugar consumption can be linked to weight gain. He subsequently left the panel (see *EU Food Law* May 1, 2009.)

It is thought that some of the EU Member States very much agree with the WHO. One Member State has strongly suggested a maximum of ten per cent of energy should come from sugar, for example, which it says in line with the WHO report in diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases. It also suggests that sugar in sweetened beverages should be limited to five per cent.

EFSA says there is no proof of Immunofortis claim

There is no proof that Danone’s Immunofortis used in baby milk formula “naturally strengthens your baby’s immune system,” EFSA said this week.

In its Opinion on the controversial baby formula milk claim, the NDA panel, responsible for health claims, found no cause and effect for the children’s health and development claim.

The claim is for a prebiotic mixture of short chain galacto-oligosaccharides and long chain fructo-oligosaccharides added to formulae for infants aged up

to 12 months at a ratio of 9:1. This is a registered trade mark of Danone.

But the NDA panel said evidence for the effect of Immunofortis on the reduction of potentially pathogenic bacteria was inconsistent and that the evidence for the effect of the product on the immune system in animal studies did not predict the occurrence of the effect in humans.

The target population was infants who are not breast fed or infants who are partially breast fed and under 12 months old.

One study suggested infants given Immunofortis had fewer allergic reactions and wheezes than the group on the placebo. But the NDA panel criticised this study because it said that the “allergic” nature of the conditions was not assessed using commonly accepted immunological parameters and it questioned on what scientific and medical basis the diagnosis and comparisons were made.

It said no conclusions could be drawn from another study that did not use the same formulation as Immunofortis, the product on which the claim is being made.

A number of studies showed there was a significant increase in bifidobacteria in the stools of infants after consumption of the active ingredient. However this did mean that immune response was proven.

The panel said that in weighing the evidence, it found considerable limitations in the one intervention study on Immunofortis and it was not convinced by the evidence in support of a biologically plausible mechanism by which Immunofortis could exert its effect.

EFSA stopped the clock on the application in the autumn to request further data (see *EU Food Law* October 9, 2009).

In the application, the company claimed that the prebiotic mixture “mimics the prebiotic effect of human milk oligosaccharides including the amount and size of distribution of molecules.”

The Aptamil milk with Immunofortis is widely sold with the claim that it “naturally strengthens your baby’s immune system” appearing on marketing material and web sites. The Aptamil brand claims to be “inspired by breastmilk, supported by science.”

The NDA panel agreed that the substance was sufficiently characterised and that the claimed effect would be beneficial to health. However it did not think the data showed cause and effect.

While EFSA adopts scientific Opinions, it is for the European Commission and the Member States to make a decision on whether a claim is allowed or not.

Danone will use the 30 day comment period to call for clarification from EFSA on why it did not find cause and effect. A spokesman said the company wanted to have a proper dialogue with EFSA and to understand why it had reached this conclusion. He said company officials are surprised by the Opinion, given the 13 randomised control studies submitted as evidence. Danone would like talks with EFSA over exactly what the scientists want to see in the dossiers submitted. Danone has more than ten years research behind Immunofortis, he added.

The UK Advertising Standards Authority threw out the Immunofortis claim in July, saying the evidence was on babies with allergies, not the general population, and that the study used a formula that was different to the one sold in the shops. A second study was carried out on babies too young to consume the product (see *EU Food Law* July 24 2009).

Five members of the NDA panel did not take part in the discussions of the Opinion because they declared an interest which was classified as a conflict of interest by EFSA under its Declaration of Interest policy.

Danone resubmits Actimel claim

The French authorities resubmitted to EFSA the Danone claim on its fermented milk Actimel last week.

Danone, which withdrew its first application in April last year to better understand what EFSA wanted, is this time round using more scientific wording.

It wants to claim that the product “helps to maintain intestinal defence function,” a spokesperson said.

He said the dossier had been rewritten but did not contain substantially new information.

The company has put in an Article 13.5 new science claim, seeking protection of proprietary data.

However the European Commission has indicated in a previous case that if studies have been published then they are not considered to be proprietary. So there is a question mark over this.

The Danone dossier is understood to contain about 12 studies that have all been published. The company has tried to focus on data to support the wording of the claim.

The Actimel product in the shops, which contains *L casei* Imunitass cultures is claimed to “help support the body’s defences.” When Danone first submitted last year, it put in for the claim “helps strengthen body defences.”

However in the past months it has become clear with the Provexis application that if EFSA should approve a very scientific claim, the European Commission will be flexible in agreeing wording that is more consumer -friendly, while respecting the science.

Danone also has another claim for Actimel with EFSA – an Article 14 claim for ageing adults over 50 who have been exposed to antibiotics (*EU Food Law* November 27, 2009).

It also resubmitted its claim on Activia (see *EU Food Law* December 4 2009). The claim sought is for lactic acid bacteria and the “improvement of gastrointestinal comfort.”

Mathioudakis presses MEPs to reach a compromise position on food labelling

Senior DG SANCO official Basil Mathioudakis this week pressed MEPs to reach a compromise over the huge number of amendments on Food Information.

He suggested to Socialist and Democrat shadow rapporteur Glenis Willmott that Guideline Daily Amounts on front of pack plus allowing colour coding in national schemes would be a way forward and would allow further testing in EU Member States of traffic lights, with a view that traffic lights could become mandatory at a later date if eventually this seemed warranted.

British MEP Willmott, who hosted the lunchtime meeting in the European Parliament, called strongly, however, for an interpretative element on front of pack across the EU, saying this is giving consumers

what they prefer with a hybrid system of GDAs and colour coding. “This is what consumers prefer and red colours do not stop people eating things,” she said. Colour coding made information accessible so that consumers could see what is important in a couple of seconds, she added.

On the issue of reaching a compromise on the hundreds of amendments from three different committees, the situation does not look hopeful.

Willmott said she would compromise but that “not everybody is willing to do it,” which is thought to be a veiled reference to the rapporteur German centre right MEP Renate Sommer.

Sommer is understood not to have so far arranged any meetings between the shadow rapporteurs, who fear the first meeting could be the end of the month while the vote in the lead committee (Environment, Public Health and Food Safety) is scheduled for the middle of March.

At the meeting this week, organised by the European Consumer organisation BEUC, the Commission also came under attack over its evidence base for the use GDAs on their own.

Mathioudakis argued that while the research on colour coding “is not contested” that it is “done in a limited number of countries and that even in the UK, “not every retailer, manufacturer is using this system.” He also questioned the way light butter would get the same red as standard butter, saying this is no incentive to reformulation. He said the Commission has a “feeling that colour coding is not yet ready for EU mandatory imposition.”

But Susanne Logstrup from the European Heart Network, asked what independent research the Commission had for GDAs, saying the position is “exactly the same.”

Ruth Veale from BEUC pointed out that its research was done in Greece, France and the Netherlands among other countries and that in these countries “consumers prefer colour coding.”

With regard to Mathioudakis’s remarks on butter, she said: “Butter and margarine are high fat products” and that even the lighter versions get a red “because they are high in fat and for us this is not an argument.”

Willmott pointed out that all the retailers in the UK are using some form of colour coding apart from one (Tesco).

Paul Kelly from the supermarket chain ASDA, which uses the hybrid model including GDAs and colour coding, said Europe must give people information so that people can make a healthy choice. “We have enough evidence,” he told the Commission bluntly. Even if you spent millions on consumer research, as he did at ASDA, at some point you “have to take a risk and get on with it,” he told MEPs and their assistants. “Otherwise there is a vacuum being filled by the food companies.”

Willmott said that if MEPs are serious about prevention of chronic diseases then they had to ensure that people were given information so that they could choose to make a healthy choice.

Speaking for Sommer, her assistant Andrea Schierbaum stressed that the rapporteur is “against mandatory GDAs and agrees with Mr Mathioudakis that there are not enough studies.”

She said that the main conclusion of most surveys is that consumers are really not very interested in food labels. “It is the energy content on the front of pack that is most important.”

ASDA reveals impact of hybrid label on sales

Sales of lasagne “fell through the floor” at ASDA when the company put front of pack GDA labels on the products with colour coding, corporate affairs director Paul Kelly acknowledged this week.

Trading managers had wanted to remove the labels but he had argued for reformulation to offer healthier options in the same category.

When this was achieved, people shifted to the healthier versions with now about 60 per cent in the healthier types and 40 per cent in the original recipes. “It is a great catalyst for reformulation,” he said.

Kelly said there had also been a big shift towards own label cereals from brands that are higher in sugar and salt.

He said the ASDA hybrid label, which combines traffic lights, GDAs and “low,” “medium” and “high” showed that given healthier alternatives people would stay in the category but some would choose the healthier option. He stressed the importance of taste, however, and said that in his view the salt reductions had been easier than reducing saturated fat.

He said a key problem for the supermarket chain is ethnic food from restaurants and takeaways where no salt or fat reductions have been made. Customers bought the Indian food in ASDA but complained “it does not look and taste the same” as the takeaway or restaurant fare where levels of fat and salt are much higher.

But overall, with the hybrid label “You can see shifts in sales patterns,” he told MEPs at the lunchtime hearing in the European Parliament organised by the European consumer organisation BEUC and hosted by British socialist MEP Glenis Willmott. He argued that people stay in the category and that the “profit is the same” for the retailer at the end of the day. Other supermarkets had found the same, he said, citing an example given by Sainsbury’s where sales of one type of chocolate pudding increased by 90 per cent and another fell by 90 per cent when colour coding was introduced.

Frosta finds no difference

In Germany, the frozen food company Frosta has found no change, however, in sales of four ready meals labelled with traffic lights which it introduced last August. One fish dish is in puff pastry and gets a red for fat while others get greens and ambers, such as a chicken dish.

But there had been no impact on sales, a representative said. She put this down to the fact that these four products are the only four in Germany to have front of pack colour coding and even in the company’s own range they are only four out of 35. She doubted if the four were even next to each other in the shop and said consumers could not make comparisons on so few products.

She said it is “almost impossible” to compare food products in Germany because manufacturers give information not per 100g but per portion. The portion might be 50g or 30g and it is almost impossible to work out in the supermarket without a calculator, she said.

Kelly argued that all ASDA’s research showed that what consumers wanted supermarkets to do was to “make it easy, make it affordable.” He said consumers spent two seconds on a purchase and that included what is in it, how much it costs as well as nutritional information. He said what matters is what people do in the real world and not just research or science.

Colour coding was also a real incentive on reformulation, he said. Companies were not motivated by going “from 18.7 per cent to 18.6 per cent – it does not have the same impact as being able to see a shift in colour. “(from red to amber for example).

“Wrong nutrition” costing 30% health budget, says AOK

The “wrong nutrition” is costing 30 per cent of Germany’s health budget, the country’s biggest health insurer told MEPs this week.

Jan Van Lente from AOK, which has 34 per cent of the German health insurance market, said this is costing 30 billion euros and called for colour coding on food. He said that if people were given traffic lights to help them make choices vast amounts of money could be saved from the healthcare budget.

“75 per cent of chronic diseases are preventable,” he told the European Parliament meeting in Brussels hosted by British Socialist Glenis Willmott.

Susanne Logstrup from the European Heart Network took a similar line, saying the number of people dying from heart disease before they are 65 is preventable and that traffic lights, while not the whole solution, were an important part. “It is an essential piece of the puzzle,” she said.

Irish Socialist Nessa Childers called too for calories to be given on alcohol so that consumers have the information.

Logstrup said alcohol is “shooting up as a risk factor” in premature deaths and can be “very high in sugar.”

BEUC’s Ruth Veale said that it is vital that alcoholic drinks are labelled because many people regard alcohol as a food.

Kelly indicated that ASDA is sympathetic to alcohol labelling and might do it on a voluntary basis even if it is not made mandatory. But he hit out at two brewers – INBEV and Carlsberg- saying they would not put any of this information on their beer unless it became mandatory, suggesting this made it harder for supermarkets to go it alone.

Kleiner to speak on claims

The head of EFSA's NDA unit Juliette Kleiner is to speak on health claims at a seminar in Brussels organised by CANTOX on 23 February.

Speaking alongside Paula Trumbo, from the US Food and Drug Administration and Lydia Dumais, from Health Canada, she will discuss scientific requirements for substantiation. The meeting will also look at regulation of health claims in Europe, the US and Canada and the expectations of health claim substantiation.

There will also be discussion of health outcomes and biomarkers, looking at disease risk reduction claims.

For further details contact: tveale@cantox.com

Dalli starts next Wednesday with key decisions needed on claims

Commissioner Designate Health and Consumer John Dalli is expected to start work next Wednesday, following a vote in the European Parliament on February 9 on the new Commission College.

The new Commission College will be installed after the hearing this week of the second Bulgarian candidate Kristalina Georgiva, who impressed MEPs and will get the humanitarian aid portfolio.

As well as the difficult question of GMOs, one of Dalli's first decisions in the area of food will be on how to progress with the Article 13 list of generic health claims.

DG SANCO decided last autumn to publish in batches, given that EFSA is publishing in batches, and give industry just six months to get labels that became banned, because they contained untrue claims, off the market. But with intense lobbying from industry, this is now up for further discussion after the Standing Committee did not meet the original January deadline for voting through the first list.

This will be one of Dalli's first tests. If he decides not to publish the lists until all 4000 claims are evaluated by EFSA at some unknown date he will face fierce criticism from the health and consumer lobbies. This would mean that many claims for which EFSA has found no evidence would remain on the market for many years and the Commission could be accused of sanctioning misleading claims. Member States too could decide to take matters into their own hands, with different actions in different parts of Europe.

He could steer a pragmatic path where he sticks to publishing the Article 13 lists in batches but agrees to give the food and food supplements industry a much longer transition period, perhaps two years or even longer. This is what many mainstream food firms are calling for so that they don't face extra costs of sudden label changes.

Perhaps the most difficult question will be what he does with the significant number of health claims where EFSA has not said that there is no evidence but has said that evidence is insufficient. This could be because of conflicting evidence or because there is only a small body of evidence.

Dalli's dilemma will only intensify with the next batch which EFSA is due to publish possibly later this month.

On a purely practical note, he has to consider if it would even be possible to adopt more than 4000 health claims at one Standing Committee meeting. His services might find the meeting never ended. In any case, they would have to prepare the decisions in batches.

EFSA issues warning on lycopene – Commission responds

Children could exceed the Acceptable Daily Intake of lycopene by 44 to 55 per cent if lycopene is added to fortify foods, EFSA warned last week. The European Commission has responded by saying levels of the additives used in soft drinks may be reduced and that there could be a possible review of the authorisations for lycopene as a novel food.

Some children are already near to the ADI from eating foods that naturally contain lycopene – such as tomato sauce- plus foods in which lycopene is used as an additive, such as soft drinks, the EFSA statement says.

The unit staff at EFSA's ANS panel, which deals with additives, used the ADI previously set by EFSA's panel experts and looked at exposure and whether people were close to exceeding this ADI of 0.5 mg/kg bodyweight a day.

They found that exposure to lycopene used as an additive and as a natural component of food meant that children who are high consumers of these foods (95th percentile) was already around or slightly below the ADI. In adults, the exposure was below the ADI.

But when the secretariat included exposure from fortified foods, they concluded that "exposure was much higher in all populations studied." High level exposure for children was 44-55 per cent above the ADI, the statement says.

"In view of the exposures already close to the ADI calculated for the other scenarios, EFSA concluded that in this case potential intakes might relatively exceed the ADI, particularly for children."

About 50 to 65 per cent of the total exposure to lycopene (excluding use as a novel food ingredient) was originating from natural sources. Based on typical use levels, desserts, including flavoured milk products, non alcoholic beverages and fine bakery products are important sources of lycopene from food colours, it says.

Commission spokesperson Nina Papadoulaki said that the Commission and Member States would consider the reduction in use of lycopene as a food colour, notably in drinks which is the main contributor to lycopene intake, to decrease the intake of children so that intake remains within the ADI. She stressed that any such amendment will be supplemented by transitional measures to take account of products on the market in which lycopene has been used as a food colour in compliance with Directive 94/36/EC.

Last year the European Commission approved as novel foods synthetic lycopene from DSM Nutritional Products and Lycopene from Blakeslea trispora from Vitatene, synthetic lycopene from BASF and LycoRed.

The products these can be used in include fruit/vegetable drinks, breakfast cereals, fats and dressings, soups other than tomato, bread and food supplements, with limits set in the legislation. The Commission did not authorise its use in some

products because of concern about over dosing (see *EU Food Law* March 13, 2009).

Papadoulaki said that these authorisation decisions "fully take account of the available EFSA Opinions." And that "in particular, it is foreseen to monitor the consumption of lycopene and to consult EFSA in the light of actual intake data." She said that if appropriate, in the light of such information, and also based on new scientific information, "the authorisations concerning the use of lycopene as a novel food ingredient shall be reviewed."

EFSA's risk assessment in January 2009 on Vitatene warned that it was as safe a form as any other but approval could mean that consumers exceed the safe amount. EFSA reached a similar verdict on the other applications (see *EU Food Law* May 9, 2008).

CIAA concerned by country of provenance amendments

Amendments that the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee adopted last week on country of provenance labelling for food ingredients have alarmed the Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries of the EU (CIAA).

Although the vote is only for a secondary opinion to feed into the main report that German Christian Democrat Renate Sommer is drawing up for the lead Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee, it was nonetheless a compromise amendment with cross-party support (see *EU Food Law* last week). The vote could well be following when the lead committee votes next month.

A spokeswoman confirmed that the CIAA was "concerned" by the AGRI amendments. "EU law already requires labelling product origin when the absence of such information may mislead the consumer as to the true origin of the food. In addition, the provision of origin information is currently permitted on a voluntary basis and industry supports maintaining the existing system," she told us.

She went on to warn that a provenance labelling rule would hit the food industry hard. "Any move to enforce mandatory origin provisions - even if this is limited to mono-ingredient foodstuffs and for primary meat or dairy ingredients of composed foodstuffs - would cause severe difficulties for manufacturers who buy ingredients from multiple sources, according

to factors such as availability, seasonal variations and price,” the spokeswoman stressed.

“It would not be possible to change the label each time the origin of a single, even if primary, component of a composite product is sourced from a different country.”

Novel foods common position nears

The Spanish presidency is aiming to adopt the common position on the Novel Foods Regulation and transmit it to the European Parliament “when possible,” an official told *EU Food Law*.

National officials based in Brussels – attaches – met on 29 January to decide on changes to the political agreement (on a common position) that the Council adopted under the Czech presidency last year (see *EU Food Law*, June 26, 2009), resulting from the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

Other than “some adaptations to the new treaty,” the official confirmed that the common position would not differ from the political agreement, particularly on key issues such as nanotechnology and cloning.

The text includes reference to food from clones and their offspring, despite European Parliament and Greek arguments that this was opening the back door to these products.

It also includes a definition of ‘engineered nanomaterials’ and requires food ingredients produced in nano form to be authorised through the novel foods procedure.

Added to that, the text introduces an accelerated authorisation procedure for primary foodstuffs from third countries which – although not previously used in the EU - have been part of the diet in the exporting country for at least 25 years.

Espinosa backs animal welfare labelling

Spanish environment and agriculture minister Elena Espinosa has given strong backing to welfare labelling on animal products sold in the EU, whether imported or home produced.

Speaking to the European Parliament’s Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee last week, in theory on environmental issues, Espinosa said, “I do think we’ve got to make an effort on labelling and animal welfare.”

Espinosa said it was important not to confuse consumers, “but we should make it easier for consumers to understand what type of production has been incorporated into products.”

Swedish Green MEP Carl Schlyter had brought up the subject of animal transport, noting that the proposal to update EU rules was delayed and asking what the Spanish presidency aimed to do about it.

Espinosa replied that there were a number of issues related to animals including transport, protection of pets and of animals used for scientific purposes. She said that there was also labelling in this context.

EU salmonella measures effective latest EFSA/ECDC report shows

EU measures to reduce salmonella in chickens – breeding and laying hens as well as broiler birds – are proving effective, according to the latest joint report on zoonoses from EFSA and the European Centre for Disease Control.

Presenting the report to journalists in Brussels on 28 January, Pia Makela of EFSA said that the salmonella data for 2008 showed a very large decrease in infections in laying hen flocks which was “most likely” due to the mandatory programmes that Member States had implemented from that year.

The report said that 19 Member States already reported a lower prevalence in laying hen flocks than the 1 per cent target that had to be met by the end of 2009. Added to that, 20 Member States met their reduction targets for Salmonella.

Makela said that there had been a “clear decline” in human salmonella cases linked to eggs, which were “the most important source of human salmonella infection.”

The report showed a total of 131,468 cases of human salmonellosis in 2008 a fall of 13.5 per cent on 2007 figures.

Makela added that it was “good to see” measures taken at EU level having a clear impact on public health.

Andrea Ammon, ECDC’s Head of Surveillance Unit agreed that it was “encouraging to see” the decline in not only Salmonella but most of the zoonotic diseases covered in the report. But she warned “there is no room for complacency.”

She told reporters, “Don’t think we can lean back now and say our job is done.”

Ammon pointed out that while the overall trend was for there to be a fall in Salmonella infections, this was not true in all Member States and with all serovars of the disease. She admitted “we don’t understand why.” While Salmonella Enteritidis, found mainly in chicken, has been decreasing, Salmonella Typhimurium, principally seen in pigs and cattle, was increasing.

The report said that the EU notification rate was 26.4 cases per 100,000 population but that ranged from 2.9 in Romania to 126.8 in Slovakia, while the Czech Republic, Germany and the UK together accounted for half of all confirmed cases (49.5 per cent) in 2008.

Koen van Dyck of the European Commission added that the measures taken to combat Salmonella were having a knock-on effect on other zoonoses such as Campylobacter.

Campylobacter the most frequent infections

Campylobacteriosis remained the most frequently reported zoonotic infection in humans across the EU with 190,566 cases notified in 2008, down from 200,507 the year before.

Raw chicken meat was “the most important food source” for Campylobacter infections, with people getting infected mainly through cross-contamination after handling the raw meat in kitchens. Makela said that a third of samples taken of raw chicken meat contained Campylobacter bacteria and that 20 to 30 per cent of human cases were from chicken.

Listeria – high mortality rate

Although Listeria is less frequent in humans than Campylobacter and Salmonella it has a high mortality rate with 20 to 30 per cent of those infected dying.

The report noted 1,381 confirmed cases in 2008.

However, Ammon stressed that it is not because a disease is in one of the lower categories that regulators pay it less attention. She said that the report places zoonosis in three categories – those with over 10,000 cases a year, those with 1 to 10,000 cases and those such as Brucellosis with less than 1,000 cases.

She pointed out that some of the diseases in the lower categories could be more serious. For examples she pointed to not only listeria but also Escherichia Coli (VTEC) responsible for 3,159 infections in 2008, a 9 per cent increase on 2007, and in 5 to 10 per cent of cases leading to kidney failure particularly in the under 5s.

EFSA guidance aims at easing antimicrobial chicken approvals

An EFSA guidance document on post-slaughter treatment of chicken with antimicrobials aims at showing firms how to gain authorisation for the process which is banned in the EU, a European Commission official said last week.

Answering a question on post-slaughter treatments from *EU Food Law* at the joint EFSA/ECDC briefing on their zoonosis report, Koen van Dyck stressed that the EU’s farm-to-fork approach meant it took steps at every stage to lower infection rates. He said that the EFSA guideline showed the documents needed for and potential applications.

When pressed about whether he meant that companies could apply for authorisation to use their products, van Dyck said that EFSA had produced guidance and it was up to applicants to resubmit their dossiers.

Van Dyck acknowledged that the Council was against the use of antimicrobial and other chemical treatments of chicken but had also asked for an EFSA opinion on the food safety aspects as well as the environmental impact, which was why the Commission had mandated EFSA. The EFSA guidance, which is open for consultation until 22 February, defines all the different questions that should be answered, he said.

The EU’s ban on post-slaughter treatment of chicken with antimicrobials and chemicals such as chlorine, effectively bars all US exports to the bloc, prompting the US to lodge a complaint with the World Trade Organisation. A key element of that complaint is that while the EU bars any treatment that has not been

approved, it does not lay down a procedure for approving the substances.

Currently, the WTO is waiting for the EU and US to name the three individuals who will serve as the Disputes Settlement panel looking into the case. The WTO has a list of names of experts in international trade law put forward by its member countries and the two can choose from there or go outside. But it is important that the two sides agree on the panel members and that the people selected are WTO legal experts.

Once the three are named then the panel has a maximum nine months to deliver its verdict. However, one diplomatic source in Geneva told us that sometimes following the decision to establish a panel, it never gets any further, presumably because the two sides manage to sort out their dispute, because they never have to give a reason why. He said he was not forecasting that for the chicken dispute, just pointing out it sometimes happened.

Commission concern over cannabis in milk

The European Commission is concerned about tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in milk when the cows are fed hemp and has asked EFSA for a risk assessment. THC is the main psychoactive substance found in the cannabis plant.

In the mandate the European Commission explains that DG SANCO has received a dossier on this from the Swiss authorities, with a safety assessment saying that the feeding of hemp results in a high concentration of THC. The Swiss concluded that the tolerable daily intake could be exceeded for some consumers.

Hemp products such as hemp straw or hemp seed oil cakes are used for feeding livestock in Europe. In 2009 some 16,800 hectares of hemp were grown, compared to 10,500 hectares the previous year. The hemp cultivated for seed is listed in an EU catalogue and there is a maximum content of THC for each variety but the Swiss assessment concludes that even for approved varieties of hemp, the feed can result in high levels of THC in milk.

The Commission wants EFSA to estimate the carry-over of THC levels in animal products, particularly milk based on the THC levels in different feeds. It wants exposure to be estimated for humans and to

identify a maximum daily intake for THC. This might include a maximum content of THC in feed in order not to have too much THC in milk.

So far EFSA is considering the request to its animal feed panel which was made before Christmas and was published last week.

GMO vote next week

The European Commission will propose authorising three GMOs at the meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on 9-10 February in Brussels.

The section on Section *Genetically Modified Food and Feed and Environmental Risk* will be asked to vote on:

- Draft Commission Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified maize 59122x1507xNK603 (DAS-59122-7xDAS-Ø15Ø7xMON-ØØ6Ø3-6) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Right of scrutiny of the European Parliament - Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003, Articles 7(3) and 19(3))
- Draft Commission Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified maize 1507x59122 (DAS-Ø15Ø7-1xDAS-59122-7) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Right of scrutiny of the European Parliament - Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003, Articles 7(3) and 19(3))
- Draft Commission Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified maize MON88017xMON810 (MON-88Ø17-3xMON-ØØ81Ø-6) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Right of scrutiny of the European Parliament - Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003, Articles 7(3) and 19(3))

All three have a positive Opinion from EFSA.

The meeting on GMOs takes place as the European Parliament is due to vote on the new Commission (9th February), which is expected to take office the following day.

There will also be some discussion items on:

- An application for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of, or produced from genetically modified maize MON88017xMON810 (MON-88Ø17-3xMON-ØØ81Ø-6) pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council
- EFSA Opinion on an application for the placing on the market of the genetically modified glyphosate tolerant maize NK603 for cultivation, food and feed uses, import and processing and for renewal of the authorisation of maize NK603 as existing products, both under Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 (food and feed aspects)

There will also be discussion of the Draft Commission Regulation on implementing rules concerning applications for authorisation of genetically modified food and feed in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council and amending Regulations No (EC) 641/2004 and (EC) No 1981/2006. These implementing rules would effectively make guidelines updated by EFSA legally binding.

There will also be discussion of the illegal GMOs being found on the EU market, which are detailed in the rapid alert system - LLRice601, BT63 rice, and Linseed FP967.

There will also be information from the Commission on the current Comitology procedures because the European Parliament is expected to challenge some of the decisions.

Additives evaluation vote

Member States may vote next week on the programme of priorities for EFSA's re evaluation of approved additives at the Standing Committee on the Food Chain (toxicological safety section.)

There will be an exchange of views on the proposal, where the European Parliament has right of scrutiny.

There will also be an exchange of views and possible opinion on a draft Commission Directive amending Directive 2008/84/EC laying down specific purity criteria on food additives other than colours and sweeteners

There will also be an exchange of views and possible vote on changes to the authorised irradiation facilities in third countries.

A decision on imports of guar gum originating or consigned from India due to contamination risks of those products by pentachlorophenol and dioxins, and repealing Commission Decision 2008/352/EC may also be made. The Commission wants to tighten up the certification because of continuing problems.

There will also be an exchange of views and possible endorsement of a draft Commission Recommendation on the monitoring of the presence of ergot alkaloids in feed and food

Finally, there will be a consultation of the Member States on the possibility to re-examine Directive 2006/52/EC in particular in relation to the use of Nitrites in meat products.

EFSA stops the clock on defences claim

EFSA has stopped the clock on the application from Friesland Foods a for health claim on natural defences and beneficial bacteria in the gut.

The Authority started work on the application on 15 September so the legal deadline would normally be February 15 but on 22 January it requested additional data.

Friesland Foods in the Netherlands wants to make an Article 14 children's claim for prebiotics on an infant formula. It wants to claim that Galacto oligosaccharides (GOS) "support natural defences by stimulating the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut." It makes other suggestions on wording such as "GOS stimulate the immune response", "GOS promote healthy gut bacteria" and "GOS stimulate the growth of bifidobacteria."

Standard infant formulae do not contain soluble oligosaccharides, the company says.

SANCO to be challenged on safety of food packaging

The lack of safeguards on materials used in food packaging will be debated in the European Parliament

on 23 February with questions from Belgian Green Bart Staes.

The MEP is concerned that substances occurring in food contact materials migrate into food and that there is only a “basic” Regulation 1935/2004 to protect consumers and specific legislation on some materials such as plastics and ceramics.

“EU wide harmonised legislation for a lot of food contact materials is still missing,” he tells DG SANCO. Commission officials will be asked to respond in a debate at the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee.

Staes raises concerns about multimaterial packages which include printing inks and asks about having a positive list of substances.

“Currently, substances which are on the market for years have often not been assessed for possible endocrine disrupting properties. Does the Commission intend to do so? Does the Commission consider the existing migration limits as appropriate with regard to endocrine disrupters?” he asks.

He also ask about reactions of different substances. He calls for businesses to carry out toxicological tests, saying current legislation on good manufacturing practices is insufficient.

The ITX contamination demonstrated the problems caused when ink drying substances migrate into food. At the time, the packaging industry called for more regulation.

EFSA GT73 Opinion criticised

The NGO Testbiotech has filed a statement to the European Commission on EFSA’s recent positive Opinion on genetically engineered oilseed rape GT73 from Monsanto, saying there are potential health risks.

EFSA delivered a favourable Opinion on further imports of GT73, which is genetically modified to tolerate the herbicide Glyphosate, known as Roundup.

Testbiotech tells the European Commission that there are substantial flaws in the feeding trials carried out by Monsanto. It raises many points already raised by Member States and argues that these points are not

answered. It also says possible impacts on the immune system are not investigated.

Testbiotech is supported by BonVenture, Fund and Foundation for Social Responsibility and Stiftung GEKKO,.

EFSA rejects Monsanto data

Biotech firms Monsanto and Cargill have withdrawn an application for a genetically engineered maize LY038 after EFSA raised safety concerns.

The companies pulled out last April but details are only now emerging because there has been no publicity over the tough line taken by EFSA’s GMO panel. The withdrawal is detailed in EFSA’s Register of Questions.

The GMO panel had stopped the clock since 4 May 2007 on the application from the joint venture company Renessen. After receiving additional data, the clock started again in January 2009 but then EFSA stopped it again on 24 March because it required further data.

Per Bergman, head of the GMO unit, called in March 2009 for a 90 day sub chronic rodent feeding study, saying kernels from the maize LY038 should be used and at least one non GM line with a history of safe use with a documented background as close as possible to the LY038. This is in line with the GMO panel guidelines, he tells them.

Furthermore, Bergman told the companies they need to redo the statistical analysis of the data from a 42 day broiler feeding study and to provide a direct comparison.

Finally, Bergman called for results of a study that in 2002 found chlorotic effects among the test and control plots (yellow or whitening of normally green plant tissues because of a decreased amount of chlorophyll.)

Renessen wrote to EFSA on 30 April saying it was withdrawing the application. It gave economic reasons for the withdrawal, not safety concerns. The letter from the head of regulatory affairs said there was decreased commercial value world-wide for LY038. Because of the business situation the “costs of extra studies can no longer be justified.”

The product is already authorised in other markets such as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This type of genetically engineered maize produces high levels of Lysin, an amino acid meant to enhance the quality of the maize for its use in animal feed. LY038 maize is an example of the so called 'second generation' of genetically engineered plants that are supposed to create benefits beyond traits achieved so far, such as herbicide tolerance.

The NGO Testbiotech welcomed the stance taken by EFSA. In a statement, it said that in most cases the EFSA does not require any animal feeding studies and proceeds on the assumption that genetically engineered plants are 'substantially equivalent' to plants derived from conventional breeding. "By withdrawing their application, Monsanto and Cargill effectively prevented the EFSA from taking a closer look at this specific product since they requested that all related documents be sent back. Perhaps they wanted to avoid any discussions on the safety of genetically engineered crops."

EFSA to hold BPA discussion with Member States

EFSA is to hold a meeting with experts from Member States on the controversial food packaging material Bisphenol A by early April to discuss its draft Opinion, which is due for adoption the following month.

The timing means that the Danish risk assessment, scheduled to be finished by the end of March, will be on the table so EFSA can take account of it and also hear the views of other Member States.

The Danish Parliament has voted for a ban on BPA in infant feeding bottles and the Danish authorities have requested a national risk assessment by the end of March.

At the EFSA meeting, the draft Opinion on BPA will be outlined, which is the responsibility of the CEF panel.

"The meeting will allow Member States to contribute any relevant national work in support of the finalisation of the EFSA Opinion," the Authority said in a statement this week.

EFSA's Advisory Forum is nominating experts to attend the meeting with members of the CEF panel

working group on BPA. These will include people who are also on the CEF panel itself, responsible for agreeing the final Opinion.

In two previous Opinions EFSA has found no safety issues with BPA at the levels used.

The latest work focuses on possible neurodevelopmental effects.

EFSA also has an agreement with the Food and Drug Administration in the United States so has access to its studies and information on a confidential basis.

The FDA said last month that it has "some concern" about the safety of BPA and announced a research programme while encouraging industry to reduce its use (see *EU Food Law* January 22, 2010).

The French food safety authority Afssa also said in November it would take another look at BPA.

The EFSA working group on BPA includes David Bell from Nottingham University; Ulla Hass from the National Food Institute in Denmark, which is doing the Danish risk assessment; Edele Holene from the Norwegian medicines agency and is on the Norwegian food safety committee which has raised questions on BPA; Tine Husoy, also on the Norwegian food safety committee and employed at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Wim Mennes, who is a vice chair of the CEF panel; Ulrike Reuter, from the Technical University of Berlin and Rosemary Waring at the University of Birmingham and a member of the CEF panel.

Claims: Member States and Commission discuss traditional use and extrapolation of results

Member State experts and the European Commission discussed the delicate topics of whether traditional use should be used as evidence for a health claim and extrapolation of study results at the Standing Committee for the Food Chain and Animal Health last month.

The issue of traditional use was discussed in the context of a controversial Italian draft national law that would allow it to be used as evidence for a claim (see separate story below). EFSA does not accept traditional use for health claims. The Italian draft proposes lists of claims on which EFSA has so far

reached a negative verdict or in some cases has not yet published an Opinion.

The Standing Committee also discussed studies that are done on people with a health condition and whether the results of those studies can be extrapolated to the general population. This follows a legal challenge from a German law firm (see separate story below) which argues the results on glucosamine should be extrapolated.

The Commission spokesperson Nina Papadoulaki said that while the issues were discussed at the meeting, that the European Commission has not taken a position.

According to the official note of this meeting, one Member State (unnamed) thought that extrapolation of results to the general population should be evaluated on a case by case basis in the context of the claimed effect, taking account of the target group and considering whether health benefits would be provided for such target group.

However, another Member State (unnamed) considered such extrapolation could be misleading, where an effect is only shown on a diseased people but then extrapolated to authorise a claim for healthy people. This was considered not to be sound scientifically.

The Commission asked Member States to “reflect” on this issue, pointing out that it had been raised by an interested party and was pertinent for the health claims being considered in the generic lists – Article 13.

This issue of whether results can be extrapolated or not goes to the heart of many of the EFSA Opinions from the NDA panel, which is responsible for health claims.

Law firm challenges EFSA over target population for health claims

The law firm Meyer Meisterernst is disputing a recent EFSA Opinion on glucosamine, saying there is “no legal basis” for EFSA’s approach in concentrating solely on the assumed target population.

The issues raised by German lawyer Christian Ballke are relevant to many EFSA health claims Opinions because they concern the target population considered and whether results can be extrapolated.

In a legal challenge to the Opinion on glucosamine hydrochloride and reduced rate of cartilage degeneration and reduced risk of developing osteoarthritis, the Munich based legal firm argues that there is no basis in law for EFSA’s approach.

The lawyers are not acting for the applicant but for a food supplement firm Quisser Pharma which distributes several products with glucosamine and wants to use the claim.

The NDA panel, responsible for health claims at EFSA, stated that the evidence does not establish that patients with osteoarthritis are representative of the target population with regard to the status of joint tissues, or that the studies on subjects with osteoarthritis can be extrapolated to the general population.

EFSA therefore found no cause and effect.

But Ballke says that the definition of target population and the assessment of the evidence provided are questionable.

“Regulation No 1924/2006 does not require the applicant of a health claim to indicate a specific target population. Regulation 353/2008 does not provide for such an obligation.”

The lawyer says EFSA is not bound to only one target population even if the applicant referred to this target population. He calls for the evaluation to have been done in a comprehensive way and not restricted to “males and females over 40 years.”

He also argues that extrapolation of results is common practices by the NDA panel and gives examples such as ALA and contribution to brain development where the NDA panel considered only one study on a six year old girl.

“EFSA might have come to a different result in its scientific opinion if other target groups had been included in the assessment and if the results obtained in studies on subjects had been extrapolated.”

He calls for the Opinion of 15 October 2009 to be amended.

Ballke told *EU Food Law* that he thought in some ways his letter raises legal issues which are more a matter for the European Commission rather than EFSA. He said that he had received an acknowledgement of his letter from the Commission

but no comment from either the Commission or EFSA. The Commission has published his letter on its web site as a comment received but has not yet published any response from EFSA.

The company Rudolph Wild has also issued a defence of its claims on the Immune Balance Drink following the unfavourable Opinion from EFSA, which has also just been published. This refers to studies submitted and gives an interpretation which was not the NDA panel's.

In a third published letter, Abtei (part of GlaxoSmithKline) welcomes the EFSA Opinion on Calcium plus Vitamin D3 chewing tablets and a reduction of risk of osteoporotic fractures by reducing bone loss. But is concerned that EFSA says there is only limited evidence on dose response. In the conditions of use, it wants a recommended daily dose of 1000mg Calcium and 800 IU Vitamin D3 or at least 500mg Calcium and minimum 400IU vitamin D3.

“This would help and provide post-menopausal women with appropriate supplement levels to reduce the risk of osteoporotic bone fractures,” it says.

There is no response yet from EFSA on these two letters.

Food supplements: controversial Italian draft law

The controversial Italian proposal to set up a national authorisation system for food supplements is bringing renewed pressure on the European Commission to bring forward EU measures on the very many substances other than vitamins and minerals that are used.

The Italian proposal, discussed at the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health last month, sets out lists of herbals and other substances and provided for an assessment by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy. It lists claimed effects, for example Ginko and memory, geranium and “regularity of intestinal transit” lutein and antioxidants, glucosamine and “articular function” as well as DHA and vision and brain function.

One aim is to have standards governing the “other substances.”

At the Standing Committee meeting, the Italian delegation argued that the measure aimed a high level of human health protection and to correctly orientate consumer choices, according to the official note of the meeting. The draft lays down labelling requirements for mandatory indications and warnings. There is also a mutual recognition clause so that products manufactured or marketed lawfully in another Member State can be sold in Italy without being labelled in accordance with the draft regulation.

Some Member States took the opportunity to underline the need to harmonise the substances other than vitamins and minerals which can be used for food supplements at the meeting. The Commission took note but state its position given in the report to the European Parliament and Council which has “not changed so far.”

The Commission raised the question of whether the nutritional or physiological effects of the substances have been substantiated and highlighted that the proposal provides for “traditional use” to be used as evidence.

The Italians said that although the claims are all listed in the proposal for each herbal or other substance that any decision to place a product on the market would be taken based on a case by case assessment following notification of the product to the authorities.

Not surprisingly, some Member States sought clarification on how this Italian draft fits in with the health and nutritional claims Regulation. The Italian delegation said that the national measures would be kept under review taking account of decisions made with regard to health claims.

The proposal was notified in December and the European Commission will express an Opinion by 23 April, taking account of the views expressed at the meeting.

The Italian proposal lists health claims that EFSA has rejected on the basis that there is no cause and effect. It also lists many claims on which EFSA has yet to issue a verdict. It also allows “Traditional use” to be put forward as scientific evidence, whereas EFSA requires clinical studies. So far EFSA has rejected every single claim for a botanical claim but the Italian draft sets out pages and pages of claims for herbals. The other substances listed include things such as amino acids, carnitine, chondatin sulphate, creatine, phytosterols in green tea, coenzyme Q10.

EFSA verdict on Madeira GM ban

EFSA has said there is no new evidence on environmental or human health aspects to justify a ban on cultivating GM plants in Madeira.

The Portuguese authorities want to declare Madeira a GM free zone and ban GM cultivation.

EFSA said it investigated the evidence but found nothing to justify the ban.

In any case, the Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso looks set to allow national authorities to make decisions on cultivation of GMOs approved by EFSA.

Emerging risks group

EFSA is considering a mandate to set up a stakeholder group to consider emerging risks.

EFSA's founding Regulation outlines its responsibilities to identify and characterise emerging risks.

EFSA wants stakeholders to share data and methodologies for identifying emerging risks through a Stakeholder Consultative Group on emerging risks through its Consultative Platform.

The mandate says members should be selected by the end of February and have four meetings by November.

When the issue was raised at the Platform last year however some were sceptical about whether industry would share confidential information.

CIAA calls for unfair commercial practices to be addressed

The European food industry association CIAA this week called for unfair commercial and contractual practices to be addressed at Community level quickly, criticising the proliferation of national initiatives which have resulted in fragmentation of the internal market.

In the position paper, CIAA welcomes the Commission undertaking to ban unfair contractual practices and calls for unfair commercial practices to also be addressed.

It calls for a more sophisticated analysis of the potential market power linked to buying alliances with further analysis of the impact of private labels.

It acknowledges the different prices for the same foods in different Member States and says that monitoring from publicly available data, empirical and market based evidence are needed.

EFSA corrects GM mistake

EFSA has published a new version of its statistical considerations on GMOs because the version published last July was subsequently found to have a "an incomplete statistical formula," the Authority has said.

The work looked at whether the GMO panel could give more detailed guidance on the performance of field trials and the analysis of data using statistical methods.

This is often a topic of controversy, not least over MON 810.

After an extensive consultation, EFSA adopted an Opinion in April of last year. But now it says the formula used to calculate the equivalence limits was incomplete so it has "adjusted" the statistical formula and revised the order of sections of the opinion to "improve the logic flow."

Food safety guidelines discussed

The European Commission stressed that new guidelines specify that food safety rules have to be applied for foodstuffs to be exported to third countries at the discussion with Member States at the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health on 26 January.

The guidelines, which have been subject to consultation with stakeholders, cover Articles 12, 18, 19, and 14 of Regulation 178/2002.

They add to the guidance given in 2004 and are not legally binding but intended to ensure the regulation is correctly applied.

The Commission also stressed that the guidance on Article 18 on traceability simplifies the list of information that an operator has to keep and reviews the length of time that it has to be kept.

Another important point is the substantial change on withdrawals and recalls on Article 19 while Article 14 elaborates on criteria to be used to assess if a food is safe.

According to the official note of the meeting published this week, most delegations taking part in the discussion welcomed the improvements in the guidelines.

Verdict on fermented red rice

Fermented red yeast rice is not a novel food, the European Commission concluded last month.

The Belgian delegation put the issue on the agenda of the Standing Committee for the Food Chain and Animal Health last month. This exclusively concerned the use in food supplements.

The Italians said that food products meeting the definition of food supplements were on the market in Italy before the Novel Food Regulation entered into force.

The Commission therefore concluded that fermented red yeast rice, when used in a food supplement, should not be considered a novel food.

Made in Israel label questioned

Socialist MEP Veronique De Keyser is asking the Council if fruit and vegetables produced in occupied Palestinian territory are being sold as “Made in Israel” in the EU.

In a written question, she says it would appear that for some years Israeli trading companies such as AGREXCO (agricultural export company) and its subsidiary CARMEL or CAL-LACHS have established themselves in several European airports, such as Bierset (Belgium) or the port of Sète (France). AGREXCO has apparently in particular established itself in the Jordan Valley and in the settlements of Mehola, Ro'i, Tekoa, Na'ama and Mitzpe Shalem and apparently produces there (or has produced there) vegetables, fruit and spices. “These vegetables and fruits are therefore apparently produced in Israeli settlements in occupied territory, illegal settlements, and are apparently distributed and sold in Europe under the label 'country of origin: Israel'. In order to do so they are apparently carried,

among others, via the European airport of Bierset and the port of Sète.

“Is this information correct, and what does the Council intend to do in the face of this illegal situation, which permits fruit and vegetables produced in occupied Palestinian territory and Jewish settlements to be sold and distributed under the 'Israel' label, in breach of international law?” she asks.

Henk van den Berg

EFSA expert Henk van den Berg has asked us to point out that he has had no activity with Unilever over the past five year, which can be seen from his Declaration of Interest.

Van den Berg says that his activities, contacts and co operation with Unilever ceased in 2001.

Our story on the conflicts of interest claims by Innocentics (*EU Food Law* January 15, 2010), which are published on the DG SANCO web site, said that EFSA executive director Catherine Geslain-Laneelle had concluded that Declarations of Interest had been scrutinised in line with EFSA policy and that EFSA had concluded that the experts did not have a conflict of interest. However, her letter, which is also published by DG SANCO does not give any specific explanations on the specific allegations.

Call for Commissioner for Food to deal with Q fever

Dutch MEP Toine Manders is calling for a European Commissioner just for food to deal with Q fever. He says in a written question to the European Commission that general practitioners and microbiologists from North Brabant have voiced their “huge” concerns over Q fever in the Netherlands.

“To date almost 3 000 Dutch people have fallen ill. Some 20 % of these have been admitted to hospital with serious pneumonia and 11 people have died. It is as yet unclear how many people will be left with lasting symptoms of Q fever, such as chronic Q fever with serious heart valve infection or fatigue.

“Some 55 of the ca 400 Netherlands goat farms are infected. Vaccination measures are insufficient to stop infection in humans. Sources of infection are not

being notified to local health services (GGD) and organisations involved in combating infection in order to protect farmers' privacy.

“The authorities have now started slaughtering infected and pregnant sheep and goats. It is almost criminal that the Netherlands has not taken effective measures — in contrast to swine fever, in connection with which all infected farms were cleared although this animal disease could not be transmitted to humans — given that human lives are at risk.

“There is clearly a wall in the Netherlands dividing economic interests in relation to animals and public health of human beings, a situation which is being promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture. It would be a good thing if the Ministry of Agriculture was changed to the Ministry of Food in order to look at interests relating to food from a broader perspective.”

He asks: “Is the Commission aware that Q fever in the Netherlands is an acute and real threat to public health in the European Union?”

“Is the Commission prepared to replace the Commissioner for Agriculture with a Commissioner for Food, given that DG SANCO only has control over the safety of foodstuffs as an end-product but not over the safety of the production of foodstuffs or the conditions in which they are produced? If not, why not?”

Replying for the European Commission, Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said mandates had been given both to EFSA and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and that the Commission is well aware of the problem of Q fever.

“The Commission has no plan to create a portfolio for a Commissioner for food. The next Commission will continue to apply the one-health policy for humans and animals. The Commissioner responsible for Health would therefore continue to be responsible for the safety of the entire food chain which includes among other hygiene during the production process, animal health and welfare policies as well as plant health policy.

“The responsibilities of the Health Commissioner will be broadened as they should also include the policy on veterinary medicines as well as the policy on the sustainable use of pesticides, which include plant protection products. This should contribute to enhance the coherence of EU integrated farm to fork policy for food production.”

ANS meets on additives

The EFSA panel responsible for additives will meet next week and one item on the agenda is the risk assessment of the natural sweetener Stevia where there three applications to be considered.

It is unclear from the published agenda what is down for discussion and what is for possible adoption but the main items are:

- Annatto extracts (EFSA-Q-2008-395)
- Basic methacrylate copolymer (EFSA-Q-2009-00452)
- Calcium lignosulfonate (EFSA-Q-2009-00374)
- Oregano and lemon balm extract (EFSA-Q-2009-00376)
- Sucrose esters of fatty acids (EFSA-Q-2009-00451)
- Brown HT (Question N° EFSA-Q-2008-244)
- E154 Brown FK (EFSA-Q-2008-243)
- Steviol glycosides (EFSA-Q-2007-071;EFSA-Q-2008-387; EFSA-Q-2008-401)
- E151 Brilliant Black BN (EFSA-Q-2008-241)
- E 123 Amaranth (EFSA-Q-2008-227)
- E 180 Litholrubine (EFSA-Q-2008-257)

Kellogg's reduces salt in leading brands

The Kellogg Company announced last week that it is reducing the amount of salt in its most popular European breakfast cereals and snacks.

Salt will be reduced across the board (in Europe only) including a 30% reduction in its Rice Krispies and Corn Flakes brands.

Kellogg's said the move will have "a significant impact" on consumers' salt intake, particularly since its Corn Flakes and Rice Krispies brands are also the basis for other major brands such as Crunchy Nut, Frosties, Coco Pops and Rice Krispies Squares.

Kellogg's said no salt replacers are being used. For its Rice Krispies-based foods the salt has been replaced by rice and for the Corn Flakes-based foods more corn has been added. "This has a negligible impact on total calories and other nutrients for each product", the company added. The new recipe for Rice Krispies and its associated products are already in stores and the reformulated Corn Flakes will be on the market from March.

"For the past twelve years we have been listening to consumers and nutrition policy leaders and gradually reduced the salt in our products without compromising on taste," said Tim Mobsby, president of Kellogg's Europe. "We have already reduced the salt in our major cereal brands by at least 50% since we started this effort in 1998 in Europe. These new reductions are an additional commitment."

Marta Baffigo, director of public affairs, Europe, added: "We are conscious of salt intake reduction as a public health and nutrition policy priority in Europe today. Our latest achievement makes a meaningful contribution to the ongoing work of the European Union in this field, particularly the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity."

FDF praise for reformulation

The news coincides with a report from the Food and Drink Federation (FDF) released the same day which praised UK manufacturers for their efforts to reduce salt in their products and reformulate.

According to the latest research, conducted by Kantar Worldpanel, the salt content of food bought in UK supermarkets has reduced by the equivalent of nearly 8 000 tonnes in the past two years.

After analysing the information on the nutrition labels of 100 000 products bought by 25000 households, the study found the net salt content of all purchases (excluding table salt) decreased by 7 667t - or 5.3% - between September 2007 to September 2009.

A number of categories saw significant decreases during that period. In the chilled convenience goods/ready meals sector, the products bought by consumers contained 18.75% less salt. The salt content of canned goods fell by 12.1% over the same period and decreased by 8.6% in the bread and morning goods sector.

"Changing recipes is a complex and costly process. But food manufacturers have been working hard to reduce the salt in their products in a way that does not impact taste or quality. These new figures clearly demonstrate that our efforts continue to make a real difference for consumers," said Julian Hunt, the FDF's director of communications.

The Food Standards Agency has been pursuing voluntary salt reduction targets in the UK, asking industry to meet a range of targets for different types of foods.

Salt reduction is also moving higher up the European agenda and the Spanish presidency is expected to get a Council Resolution in June.

READER'S LETTER

From Patti Rundall Babymilkaction

I read with interest the report from the WHO Executive Board about the recommendations on marketing junk food to children. I attended as a member of the Save the Children delegation, alongside the International Baby Food Action (IBFAN) and Consumers International, and I wanted to clarify that all the NGOs involved spoke strongly in support of them, as did all the Member States who made interventions. The majority of criticisms were focused on strengthening - not weakening - the recommendations and will have sent a really strong signal to WHO that they are on the right track in this critically important area of public health.

*- Patti Rundall, OBE,
Policy Director, Babymilkaction*

UPSTREAM AND DOWNSTREAM

MEPs debate new plans for green-focused CAP

A new-look CAP, which plays a role as "manager of the bio-sphere", would offer a way of transitioning to a new model of "ecologically, economically and socially efficient agriculture", French Socialist MEP Stéphane Le Foll told an agriculture committee hearing in the European Parliament last week.

Le Foll presented an own-initiative draft resolution on agriculture and climate change, which argues that a future CAP must be as much about environmental policy as it about agricultural and food policy.

The future CAP, according to Le Foll, must be able to help mitigate global warming in three ways: limiting agriculture's own greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, promoting carbon storage in the soil, and producing sustainable and renewable energies.

The rapporteur warned, however, that Europe must also guarantee a transition to a new model of production which was economically viable.

Debating the Le Foll report, French Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA) MEP Jose Bové said the CAP's current economic model had so far failed to help the sector. He argued that the new CAP must ensure it "turns its back on 30 years of mistake and destruction of EU agriculture".

New principles

But on a more positive note, Rob Cooke, Director of Natural England, a UK government advisory body, told the hearing that forestry and agri-environmental measures within the second pillar of the CAP had already made "a substantial contribution to climate change mitigation".

Although these measures were not the main tool for reducing GHG emissions or boosting renewable energy production, "the carbon savings that they

deliver come with an assurance that they have been achieved in a way (...) that is consistent with principles of sustainability", he said.

'Conservation agriculture'

US Department of Agriculture scientist Donald Reicosky agreed that "conservation agriculture" was the way to reconcile farming and the environment.

He explained that soil carbon sequestration could offer opportunities to improve the ecosystem. Carbon in the soil increased water holding capacity and hence reduced erosion, but it could also reduce air pollution, lower the need for fertiliser inputs, and enhance the soil's capacity to handle waste materials.

"Adaptation and mitigation are linked and complementary strategies", added Jan Verhagen, an agrosystems researcher at Wageningen University.

He added that "integrating climate change in agricultural plans and policies" was the way forward, but nevertheless stressed that adaptation and mitigation costs were "still unclear".

Increasing resilience

The impact of climate change on agriculture could result in water shortages and drought, new diseases, heat stress for animals and risks linked to extreme weather events, according to Maciej Jerzy Sadowski, from the EU research programme 'Global Change'

Increasing the resilience of farming systems, improving water management and reserving lands for future production are key factors for a long-term policy response, he said. He also said that raising awareness of policy among farmers and decision makers was key and that policy should be developed at both national and EU levels. He said that priorities should be given to local activities and individual farms.

The hearing contributed to discussion of the Le Foll report, which is due to be put to a committee vote on March 17. The deadline for amendments was February 2.

COUNTRY REPORTS

FINLAND

CZECH REPUBLIC

Erectile dysfunction supplements banned

The Czech Agriculture and Food Inspection Authority banned two food supplements intended to treat erectile dysfunction over the past 10 days because their contents could be a risk to health.

At the end of last week CAFIA banned Golden Erect imported from the Netherlands by VaV trading company, Ltd. The product contains the herb Tongat Ali, which is another name for the plant *Eurycoma longifolia* (Malayan Ginseng), a novel food whose use has yet to be approved by the European Commission.

Then on 2 February, following a tip off from the Czech State Institute for Drug Control, CAFIA outlawed Intim-x produced in Slovakia. Sampling showed the product contains hydroxyhomosildenafil and acetildenafil, substances similar to sildenafil the active ingredient in Viagra.

DENMARK

Warning over IDS sports pills

The Danish authorities have issued a warning to consumers over IDS Sports pills Bromodrol, Dual Action Tabs Grow, Grow Tabs and Mass loss and Ripped Tabs TR.

These are likely to contain undeclared anabolic steroids or drugs, according to the Food and Drug Administration in the United States.

They are sold as dietary supplements to people who coach athletes, says the Food and Veterinary Administration, which warns they can cause liver damage, impotence, increased risk of heart attack and the development of male sex characteristics in women as well as mood swings and depression.

Pesticide residue controls focused on Thai imports in 2008

The Finnish food safety agency Evira has revealed that in 2008 it focused controls for pesticide residues on imports from Thailand since these showed levels above the maximum limits.

The annual report for 2008, released at the end of last month, showed that overall similar levels of pesticide residues were found in foods of plant origin in 2008 as in previous years.

Around 2000 food products of plant origin were analysed in 2008 for residues of 256 different pesticides. Most of the samples were fresh fruit and vegetables and the rest were cereals and processed products.

More than half of the products (59 per cent) contained residues of one or several pesticides. However, the levels were in most cases low and 94 per cent of the products conformed to regulations.

Pesticide residues were found in 37 per cent of the domestic products analysed, with the maximum permitted level exceeded in only two samples (raspberry and dill).

The proportion (6 per cent) of non-conforming products found in residue control increased by only 1 per cent over 2007. The focusing of control efforts on Thai products can be considered to be one factor contributing to this increase.

Products of Thai origin accounted for 28 per cent of the non-conforming products.

Residues were especially found in fresh spice herbs, such as coriander and basil, in fresh spice peppers, beans, eggplant and onion.

The other non-conforming products came evenly from several countries with China (6 per cent), Egypt and Israel (5 per cent) ranking second highest as countries of origin of non-conforming products.

Thai products accounted for 50 per cent in the group of products subjected to follow-up sampling due to previous non-conformities.

FRANCE

Set reference values on average need not intake, says AFSSA

The French food safety agency Afssa is calling for nutritional reference values to be set according average nutritional needs (besoin nutritionnel moyen – BNM) not recommended intakes of the vitamin or mineral.

In an opinion on a proposal to amend French law on nutritional labelling to implement Directive 2008/100/EC on recommended daily amounts, AFSSA says average nutritional need is the most appropriate reference value. The opinion does not elaborate on the difference between average nutritional need and recommended intake.

Afssa also argues that there should be separate RDAs for children and old people, since these two population groups have specific needs that are significantly different from those of the rest of the population, used as the reference. Added to that, certain products are designed just for these two groups.

The opinion says that the Directive and the draft law implementing it would set higher recommended intakes for certain vitamins and minerals than the current French norms. This is the case for vitamin K (75 µg/day as opposed to 45 µg/day), niacin (16 µg/day as opposed to 14/11 µg/day), vitamin B12 (2.5 µg/day as opposed to 2.4 µg/day), pantothenic acid (l'acide pantothénique) (6 mg/day as opposed to 5 mg/day) and fluoride (3.5 mg/day as opposed to 2.5 mg/day).

However, AFSSA does not believe that the differences would mean a risk for consumers because the RDA values in the proposal are lower than European safety limits.

The proposal will also lay down a method for calculating energy and a definition of fibre. AFSSA has no comments on the method for calculating energy and the only comment it wants to make on the definition of fibre (which includes erythrocin) is that the choice of a future dosage method should be done with the work of Codex in mind.

SWEDEN

Illegal GMOs found

The Swedish authorities have found four traces of genetically modified plants that are not approved in the EU in some 39 samples of soy, corn, rice and flaxseed.

Some 20 out of 76 controlled companies were using a “GMO free” label, which the authorities consider to be misleading.

In the 39 samples, some five contained approved GMOs below the threshold required for labelling (0.9 per cent).

Four samples, two rice and two flaxseed, contained GMOs which are not allowed in the EU. These products were withdrawn by the companies.

Some 11 organic products had traces of GMOs.

Inspectors checked through products labelled “GMO free” and the companies were told that this labelling is not allowed.

Swedes know keyhole symbol

Some 98 per cent of Swedish people know or have heard of the green keyhole symbol, used to identify healthier choices, according to a new survey from the Swedish National Food Administration.

Most of them know that it stands for a healthier choice and have confidence in it.

The Keyhole symbol, which was launched in Sweden 20 years ago, is used since June 2009 in Denmark and Norway.

Some 72 per cent of respondents said they were “very aware” of the Keyhole or “fairly well” aware.

In Norway, where it has only been used fairly recently, some 53 per cent know about it or have heard of it and some 36 per cent say they know it well or very well.

The survey done by Zapera interviewed nearly 4,000 people in Sweden, Norway and Denmark who are wholly or partly responsible for buying food.

The Danish Food and Veterinary Administration said that 57 per cent of people responsible for food shopping knew the Keyhole symbol. Agriculture Minister Eva Kjer Hansen said it shows consumers how to make a healthier choice.

Some 400 products such as bread, fish and frozen vegetables carry the symbol because they contain less salt, sugar and fat. The Ministry of Agriculture ran an awareness campaign in October 2009 based on “what have you got in the bag” and starts a new campaign this week.

UNITED KINGDOM

UK Soil Association urges end to shipping food by air

Consumers' desire to eat a huge range of food not grown locally is contributing to global warming, and the first step to combating this threat would be giving up air shipments, Patrick Holden, director of the Soil Association, an organic advocacy group, argued last week.

Speaking on a City Food Lecture panel at London's Guildhall, Holden declared, "We should buy as great a proportion of food as possible locally. There is still a role for international trade, but we will have to give up air trade."

Key members of the British food industry, including Paul Conway, senior vice president of Cargill Inc, and keynote speaker David King, director of Oxford University's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, gathered to discuss "Managing the Earth's resources to deliver food for nine billion," at the invitation-only event last week.

King stressed that there is no simple answer to the issue of transport pollution and that producing food in a region not accustomed to a product can be as destructive as transporting it from a region where it naturally grows. "Several economies are dependent on imports. If a product needs to be kept warm to be produced in an area which doesn't naturally have the climate for production of that product in order to avoid transporting it, the carbon footprint will be

bigger," he said, adding: "But people want to eat oranges in the UK."

The panel agreed that countries should produce food that they are best able to produce, "and in the UK that's dairy," King noted.

FSA meeting on labelling

The meeting on Front of Pack labelling organised by the Food Standards Agency for this Friday (see *EU Food Law* last week) has been postponed. It is understood that some key people were unable to attend on that day. The board will still hold its discussion in March.

INTERNATIONAL

Brazil aligns food safety policies with those of Germany

Brazil and Germany have signed a five-year cooperation agreement aimed at aligning food safety policy. In support of that accord, Brazil announced it would ban the use of cyhexatine-based insecticides and pledged to closely monitor biotech crops.

"The Germans have an exemplary veterinary service that guarantees the safety of animal-based food products. This agreement should benefit Brazilian sanitation officials as they strive to improve our food certification system and our reputation in that area," says Brazil's Agricultural Defense Secretary Inacio Kroetz upon signing the five-year renewable agreement Jan. 15 in Berlin.

Kroetz forecasts that the pact will lay a solid foundation for food trade while spelling out appropriate responses in case of a sanitation breach. He predicts that it will pave the way to a level of technical cooperation that could position Brazil along with Chile as a Latin American leader in food safety.

Cyhexatine pesticides banned

Cyhexatine, the ingredient that Brazil's agriculture ministry seeks to ban as a part of the country's new agreement with Germany, appears on the European Commission's list of restricted harmful pesticides. It is found in seven agricultural chemical products — which Brazilian citrus growers use to eliminate mites

on citrus fruit, including lemons, limes, and tanginess — that will be banned on Oct. 31, 2011.

Luis Eduardo Pacifici, pesticide coordinator for the Secretariat of Agricultural Defense, estimates that the deadline gives farmers enough time to find alternative pesticides without significantly boosting production cost. He explains that cyhexatine-based pesticides are only one of 14 groups being evaluated in light of EU standards.

In recognition of EU concerns about rapidly expanding cultivation of genetically modified crops in Brazil and its neighbours, Marcus Vinicius Coelho, biosafety coordinator of Brazil's agriculture ministry, pledged to institute a comprehensive inspection program covering experimentation and commercial use of biotech varieties.

"This system is fundamental to ensuring that unauthorized GMOs do not make their way into the food chain," Coelho said, stressing that the program had recently received a favourable review from DG SANCO.

UNITED STATES

Harkin praises Surgeon General's call to action on obesity

With Congress poised to continue its debate over the Child Nutrition Act this year, Surgeon General Regina Benjamin released her 18-page outline for combating obesity and excessive weight, starting in childhood, last week.

In "Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation," available at www.surgeongeneral.gov, Benjamin calls the ever-increasing rate of health problems attributed to obesity "a crisis" and a future where children fail to live longer than their parents "unacceptable."

Among her many suggestions, Benjamin promotes breastfeeding babies exclusively until they are six months old and having children, by age two, drink low-fat or non-fat milk. She suggests schools establish nutrition standards and "ensure the availability of appealing, healthy food options that enable students to comply with recommendations in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins."

Also for schools, she advocates limiting amounts of high calorie snack options, including beverages in vending machines.

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), chairman of the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, praises Benjamin's call to action. "Today's report shows what we have known for far too long — that bad eating habits and physical inactivity are causing America's children to be more obese and unhealthy than ever before," he says in a statement.

The Senate is to reauthorize the Child Nutrition Act this year, which will likely trigger debate over what kinds of foods should be made available to children during the school day.

FDA plans to nearly double foreign facility inspections in FY 2010

FDA is planning to ramp up its foreign food facility inspections next fiscal year, jumping from 600 inspections by the end of fiscal 2010 to 1,000 inspections in FY 2011, Stephen Sundlof, director of FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, revealed at a recent meeting.

Sundlof mapped out FDA's plans to nearly double foreign inspections at Dairy Forum 2010, a meeting held Jan. 20, in Phoenix, and sponsored by the International Dairy Foods Association.

FDA completed 212 foreign facility inspections for businesses that hold, pack or process foods in FY 2009 and plans to conduct another 600 foreign food facility inspections in FY 2010. For the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, FDA plans to complete 1,000 foreign food facility inspections.

Still, 1,000 facility inspections are likely to put only a small dent in the 236,078 foreign food facilities registered with FDA. Simultaneously, FDA must keep tabs on another 158,135 facilities registered as U.S. food facilities.

This year, FDA inspectors have zeroed in on foreign operations that handle produce, seafood, dairy and low-acid canned food/acidified foods, all considered high risk priorities. For FY 2011, FDA will continue targeting the same high-risk operations but add low-moisture food ingredients, such as spices and dried vegetables.

FDA investigators also will be looking for the use of unusual or illegal ingredients in the foods being manufactured. "Our investigators will undoubtedly look for the presence of melamine, particularly during foreign inspections of dairy and ingredient manufacturers," the FDA spokesman says.

Francos to leave FDA, join Herbalife

Vasilios Francos, director of dietary supplement programs in FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, plans to retire next month, but he won't be spending much time on the golf course. He will be joining Los Angeles-based Herbalife Ltd. as senior vice president for product compliance and safety, effective in April, and reporting to the company's general counsel, Brett Chapman.

Francos is one of the nation's foremost authorities on dietary supplements, possessing more than two decades of experience in creating policies and standards for safe and effective dietary supplements and ingredients, Herbalife says in a press release. He has led efforts in developing good manufacturing practices (cGMPs) and Serious Adverse Events Reporting, the company says.

"Bill Francos exemplifies Herbalife's commitment to providing science-based nutritional supplements of the highest quality available in the marketplace," says Michael Johnson, Herbalife's chairman and CEO.

Daniele blames salami recall on pepper coating

The largest meat recall in 18 months may not have been caused by meat at all.

USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service announced Jan. 23 that Daniele International Inc.,

based in Mapleville and Pascoag, R.I., is recalling 1.24 million pounds of salami products due to possible contamination with Salmonella, making it the largest recall since Nebraska Beef recalled six million pounds of ground beef in July 2008. The list of 44 retailers where the 18 possibly tainted Daniele products were sold across the country includes such notable stores as Costco, Sam's Club, Walmart and Kroger's (www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/RC_006_2010_Retail_List.pdf).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it has tracked as many as 189 cases of Salmonella Montevideo in 40 states since last July, at least some of which authorities believe are linked to the Daniele recall. There have so far been no deaths reported.

The salami produced by Daniele, mostly sold in variety packs, originally was implicated after public health inspectors compared grocery store receipts from some of the people who had become ill and found that many had purchased products from the company, Daniele spokesman Jason Maloni says.

FSIS thus far has offered no suggestions as to how Daniele's salami became contaminated, but in a Q&A posted on Daniele's Web site, the company clearly lays the blame on pepper used to coat the meat. The Web site (www.danielefoods.com/daniele-recall-faq.pdf) reads as follows:

"Q: Why is this product being recalled?"

"A: Samples of the black pepper used to coat some of our products have tested positive for Salmonella. A sample of the recalled product has been linked to an outbreak of salmonellosis."

Following the recall, Daniele has decided to use only pepper that has been irradiated, a treatment that should kill all pathogens on the peppercorns before they are ground, Maloni said. The switch was made Jan. 25, Maloni .

EU FOOD LAW

WEEKLY

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