

(09) PR 1  
14.01.2009

**Pig & beef contamination by PCBs/dioxins in breadmeal  
FEFAC background note in view of the next EP AGRI Committee debate  
(19 January 2009 – Agenda item n° 9)**

**A. The facts**

- The Irish authorities notified high levels of PCBs/Dioxins in pigfat samples as from 6 December 2008. The contaminated pigs came from 10 large scale pig farms which used contaminated breadmeal in their home-mixing operations.
- The use of PCB containing electronic transformer oil as fuel agent since August 2008 in a food recycling plant, registered as a feed manufacturing plant, drying breadmeal and other surplus foods, was at the origin of the contamination through contact between exhaust fumes with the dried goods.
- EFSA delivered an opinion on 10 December 2008 declaring recorded levels in pigmeat as of no immediate health risk for consumers.
- A full product recall was ordered for pig products delivered to 14 Member States and 9 Third Countries. A subsequent targeted recall for beef products stemming from 21 beef cattle farms in intermediate storage took place in Ireland and 4 Member States following RASFF notification of positive test results on 19 December 2008.

**B. The EU law: responsibilities of feed business operators (FBOs) & official control**

- All FBOs registered/approved under the EU Feed Hygiene Regulation other than primary producers of feed (i.e. farmers) must implement a HACCP based risk analysis and an auto-control plan (Regulation (EC) No 183/2005). Millstream was registered as feed business operator and subject to the above mentioned obligations.
- Official control authorities must implement a risk-based official control plan: the Irish authorities stated in the ongoing Irish parliamentary enquiry that the drying plant in question was classified as “low-risk”, due to the “high-grade” nature of the food products processed by the company; the drying plant was therefore not subject to specific PCB/Dioxins surveillance by control authorities in charge of feed safety.
- Past feed safety incidents however showed a clear pattern of risk associated with dryers, direct drying technology and fuels used to operate:
  - 2003: PCB/Dioxin contamination of dried green meal in Germany following the use of PCB contaminated railway sleepers as fuel source in direct drying equipment. This led to the adoption of national authorisation schemes for industrial drying plants of forages and surplus foods, imposing regular testing for dioxins, furans and other undesirable substances (cadmium, lead, arsenic)
  - 2005: Dioxins in breadmeal in Belgium resulting from direct contact of burning flames with the dried goods
  - Previous incidents have established PCB/Dioxins as a key source of feed material contamination resulting from multiple origins: dioxins in Citrus pulp from Brazil (1998, contaminated industrial lime), PCB/Dioxins in animal fat in Belgium (1999 – transformer oil), natural dioxin residues in kaolinite (feed additive) in Germany (1999 – natural

presence), Dioxins in Choline chloride (feed additive) in Spain (2000 – use of pentachlorophenol-treated wood as carrier), Dioxin in Copper carboxan (feed additive) from the US (2002 – use of chlorinated water with a high temperature process treatment), Dioxins in potato pulp in The Netherlands (2005 – use of kaolinite), Dioxins in pig bone fat, Belgium (2005 – contaminated HCL), PCB/Dioxins in fishoil (Baltic sea, North-Atlantic)

- Many national authorities and compound feed manufacturers carry out comprehensive testing programmes on PCB/Dioxins and feed materials to ensure compliance with legal maximum limits laid down in EU legislation for undesirable substances in animal feed (Directive 2002/32/EC)
- FEFAC (compound feed & premixes), FEFANA (feed additives and premixes) and FEDIAF (petfood) have developed and implemented codes of good manufacturing practices covering the control of undesirable substances in feedingstuffs. These guides have been assessed by the European Commission under the Feed Hygiene Regulation.

### **C. The lessons to be learnt**

- Official environmental controls on disposal and destruction of banned PCB oils (since 1989) remain inefficient and a continuous problem for the EU feed and food chain.
- Risk classification of FBOs according to process activities and implementation of HACCP-based official and auto-control programmes (cf. FVO country reports on feed hygiene and general audits, 2007) is uneven in Member States.
- EU-wide FBO approval criteria for drying plants with regard to control of undesirable substances in dried goods depending on drying technology and fuel source should be envisaged.
- Not all Member States have established accredited PCB/Dioxin laboratory testing capacity.
- EU-wide guides on good feed hygiene practice for feed material manufacturers and on-farm mixers are still missing, i.e. have not yet been submitted for assessment to the European Commission