



EU mechanisms for crisis management and preparedness in the field of the safety of food and feed

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SUMMARY

- The context: global market and food production complexity
- EU legal framework
- The general crisis plan for food and feed
- Communication aspects
- Conclusions



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Food and feed borne incidents in the context of the global market

The enormous quantity of agri-food products traded every day, and the complexity of the food/feed production chain, increase exponentially the possibility that a national incident becomes a multi-country incident.



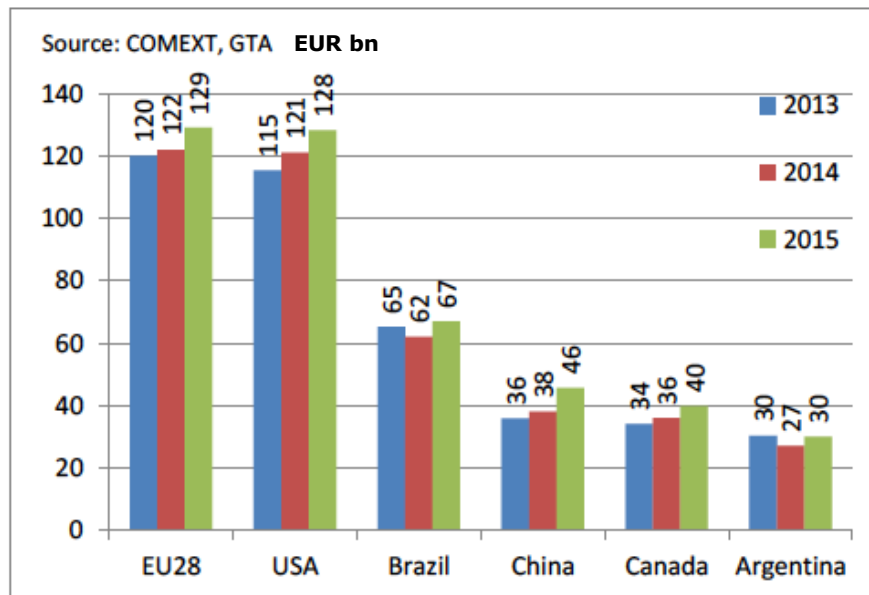


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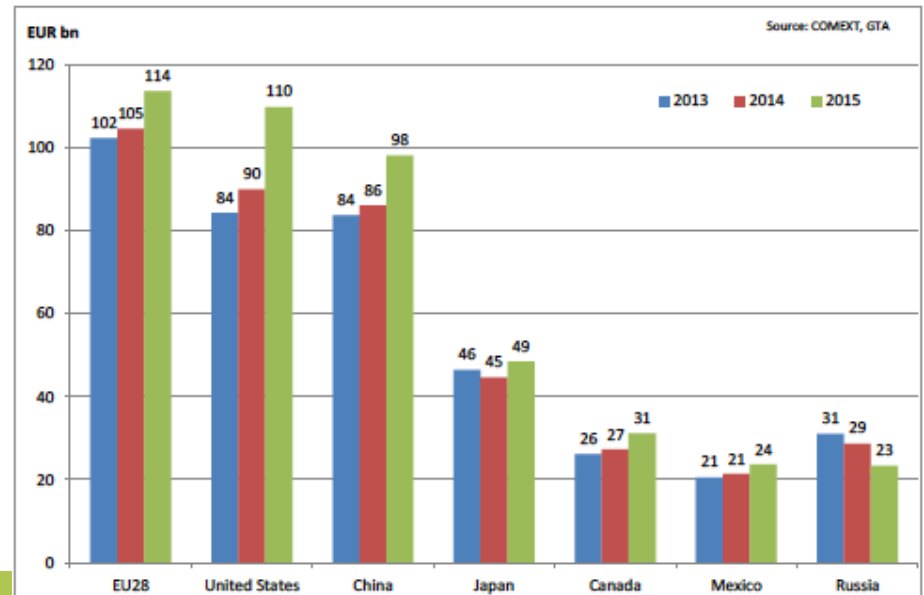
the global market of agricultural goods

- Total value of imports/exports of agricultural goods between the EU-28 and the rest of the world: EUR 263 billion in 2016
- This monetary value corresponded to 244 million tonnes of agricultural merchandise

Graph 1: Top world agri-food exporters

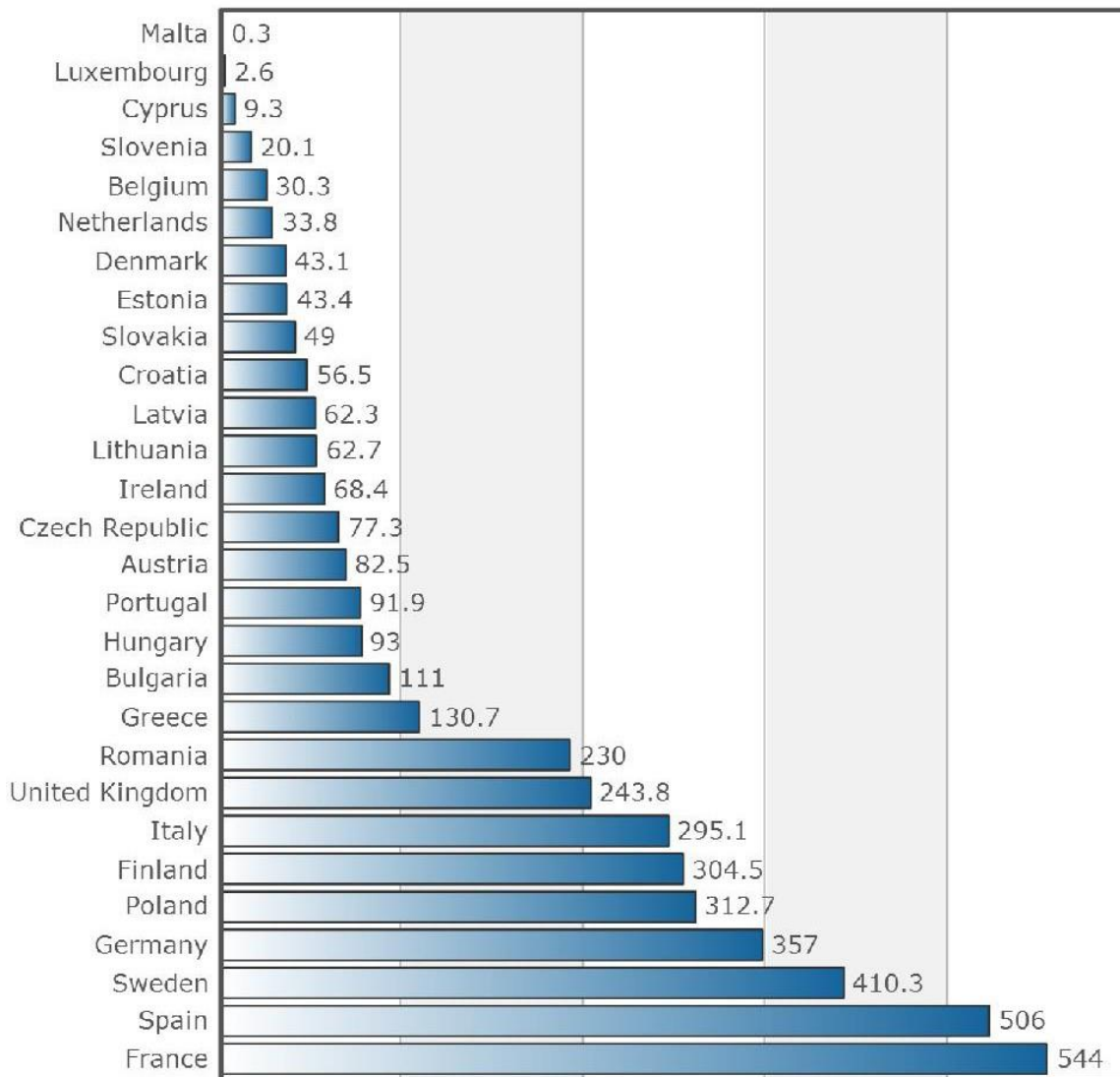


Graph 2: Top world agri-food importers





Surface area in thousands of square kilometres (Total: 4271,6)



1 EU but 28 MS

Wide variety of:

- Climates
- Agricultural products
- Farming systems
- Food products
- Distribution networks
- Food safety perceptions
- Food management systems
- Risk communication methods

Complexity of the food chain: the pizza's example



35 ingredients, 60 countries, 5 continents



EU LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- The legal framework to prevent, monitor and manage food/feed-borne outbreaks or incidents is multidisciplinary
- It contains requirements for public health and food/feed safety managers, risk assessors and risk communicators
- The need for coordination between these actors and between different levels (local, national, EU and international) is laid down in these EU rules



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FOOD/FEED-BORNE OUTBREAKS: THE EU APPROACH

- Prevention
- Preparedness
- Investigations
- Management
- Communication
- Reporting/publication





LEGAL FRAMEWORK (veterinary)

- Regulation (EC) 178/2002: traceability, EFSA, RASFF, emergencies and crisis plan
- **New Decision 2019/300/EU: updated general plan for food/feed crisis management, network of crisis coordinators**
- Food Hygiene Package: general and specific hygiene rules, official control
- Regulations (EC) 882/2004 (2017/625): official controls and contingency planning
- Directive 2003/99/EC: monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents, epidemiological investigation of food-borne outbreaks

LEGAL FRAMEWORK (public health)

- Decision 1082/2013/EU: serious cross-border threats to health; establishes EWRS, establishes the Health Security Committee (HSC)
- Regulation (EC) No 851/2004: establishes ECDC

The legal basis for incident/crisis management at EU level

- **Article 55 of Regulation (EC) 178/2002**

*"The Commission shall draw up, in close collaboration with the Authority and the Member States, a **general plan for crisis management** in the field of the safety of food and feed"*

-> Commission Implementing Decision 2019/300/EU on the general plan for crisis management replacing Decision 2004/478/EC

The need for a revision/update

- **Experience gained** with several multi-country outbreaks since 2004:
 - ✓ **2011 - E. coli in sprouts**
 - ✓ **2016 - Salmonella in eggs**
 - ✓ **2017 - Fipronil in poultry**
 - ✓ **2018 - Listeria in frozen vegetables**
- REFIT **evaluation** of Regulation (EC) 178/2002, including crisis management arrangements
- Recommendations of the 2017 **internal audit** on "DG SANTE's food safety crisis preparedness"

The scope of the general plan (Dec. 2019/300)

- Food and feed
- Biological, chemical and physical hazards
- Direct or indirect risk to human health
- Not adequately managed solely by emergency measures
- Two situations (levels):
 - ✓ **Enhanced EU coordination**
 - ✓ **Setting up of a crisis unit**

Enhanced EU coordination: criteria

- Direct or indirect public health risk with two or more Member States involved with epidemiological or traceability link
- Or**
- Serious potential impact on the functioning of the single market

AND

- Difficulties to identify the source
- Or**
- Disagreement between Member States on actions

Enhanced EU coordination: SANTE actions

- Analysis of RASFF/EWRS data with identification of gaps and request for more information;
- Organisation of audio- and video-conferences
- Initial assessment of impact
- Coordination of communication lines
- Deployment of on-the-spot expert missions when necessary
- Use of crisis coordination network to collect and distribute information
- Involve EU agencies within their competence

Setting-up of crisis unit: criteria

- Criteria of enhanced coordination
- AND**
- Serious risk to human health, with fatalities, and/or
 - Repetition of incidents, and/or
 - Suspicion or indication of bioterrorism

The crisis unit

- **Role:** coordination of crisis response strategy, including coordination of communication, of traceability investigations and of withdrawal/recall activities
- **Procedures:** same as enhanced coordination, with appropriate intensity
- **Composition:** crisis coordinators of Commission (chair by DG or DDG or Dir.), EFSA, Member States directly involved, and others as appropriate
- Ad hoc additional administrative support by the Commission.

Communication

- Normal confidentiality rules apply
- Coordination of communication between Commission, EU agencies and Member States
- Clear, targeted and effective, timely, sound, reliable and coherent, including uncertainty
- Advance information on intended announcements to all involved partners
- Respect of mutual competences
- Use of international networks (INFOSAN, WHO, FAO, OIE) if third country involvement

Specific communication strategy of the crisis unit

- Consistent and coordinated key messages
- Provision on reliable evidence & clear info on products affected
- Member States to ensure coherent communication at national level

Resolution of the crisis

- Commission decision after consultation of crisis unit
 - ✓ **Downgrading to enhanced coordination situation**
 - ✓ **Full resolution**
- Basis: information submitted through RASFF and continued reporting of human cases
- **Post-crisis assessment** at least after each setting-up of crisis unit

Examples of SANTE concrete actions for increased preparedness

- **Animation of the network of crisis coordinators** with EU agencies and MS
- RASFF-EWRS interlinkage
- Support by **EURL-NRL network**
- **Training** within BTSF
- Simulation **exercises** (last EU-28 exercise **4 to 6 December 2018 in Brussels**)
- Follow-up of Member States' **contingency plans**
- Development of **internal SOPs** on food/feed-borne crisis preparedness and management
- Regular Monitoring and information collection through existing networks

Crisis coordinators

- At EU (COM, EFSA, ECDC) and national level
- Member States to decide who at national level, but he/she is expected to:
 - ✓ **Coordinate at national level, including providing feedback after incident**
 - ✓ **Represent certain authority in the decision making on management measures and communication**
 - ✓ **Participation to audio-/video-conferences**
 - ✓ **Participation to simulation exercises**
- At least annual meeting organised by the Commission

Some conclusions/final remarks

- Substantial efforts have been made by the Commission for **improved risk management approaches** at EU level in the last 5 years
- **Enhanced preparedness** at EU and national level in a structured way is of increasing importance since modern analytical tools (whole genome sequencing) are expected to result in the **detection of more outbreaks**
- **Cooperation** (PH-AH, EU-national-regional, risk managers-assessors) is essential using existing networks (e.g. RASFF) and respecting each other competence
- **Appropriate risk management measures** are expected to be taken by the concerned MS when the origin of the outbreak is identified



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Questions?