



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
HEALTH & CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate G – Veterinary and International affairs  
**G4 – Food, Alert system and training**



*Rapid Alert System for **Food and Feed***

# **Preliminary Annual Report**

# ***2011***

# 1. The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)

The RASFF was put in place to provide food and feed control authorities with an effective tool to exchange information about measures taken responding to serious risks detected in relation to food or feed. This exchange of information helps Member States to act more rapidly and in a coordinated manner in response to a health threat caused by food or feed. Its effectiveness is ensured by keeping its structure simple: it consists essentially of clearly identified contact points in the Commission, EFSA<sup>1</sup>, EEA<sup>2</sup> and at national level in member countries, exchanging information in a clear and structured way by means of templates.

## ***The legal basis***

The legal basis of the RASFF is Regulation (EC) N° 178/2002. Article 50 of this Regulation establishes the rapid alert system for food and feed as a network involving the Member States, the Commission as member and manager of the system and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Also the EEA countries: Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, are longstanding members of the RASFF.

Whenever a member of the network has any information relating to the existence of a serious direct or indirect risk to human health deriving from food or feed, this information is immediately notified to the Commission under the RASFF. The Commission immediately transmits this information to the members of the network.

Article 50.3 of the Regulation lays down additional criteria for when a RASFF notification is required.

Without prejudice to other Community legislation, the Member States shall immediately notify the Commission under the rapid alert system of:

- (a) any measure they adopt which is aimed at restricting the placing on the market or forcing the withdrawal from the market or the recall of food or feed in order to protect human health and requiring rapid action;
- (b) any recommendation or agreement with professional operators which is aimed, on a voluntary or obligatory basis, at preventing, limiting or imposing specific conditions on the placing on the market or the eventual use of food or feed on account of a serious risk to human health requiring rapid action;
- (c) any rejection, related to a direct or indirect risk to human health, of a batch, container or cargo of food or feed by a competent authority at a border post within the European Union.

Regulation (EC) N° 16/2011 lays down implementing rules for the RASFF. It entered into force on 31 January 2011. The Regulation lays down requirements for members of the network and the procedure for transmission of the different types of notifications. A difference is made between notifications requiring rapid action (alert notifications) and other notifications (information notifications and border rejection notifications). Therefore definitions of these different types of notifications are added. In addition the role of the Commission as manager of the network is detailed.

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<sup>1</sup> European Food Safety Authority, [www.efsa.europa.eu](http://www.efsa.europa.eu)

<sup>2</sup> EFTA Surveillance Authority, <http://www.eftasurv.int>

## **The members:**

All members of the system have out-of-hours arrangements (7 days/7, 24 hour/24) to ensure that in case of an urgent notification being made outside of office hours, on-duty officers can be warned, acknowledge the urgent information and take appropriate action. All member organisations of the RASFF – where contact points are identified – are listed and their home pages can be consulted on the internet from the following RASFF web page:

[http://ec.europa.eu/comm/food/food/rapidalert/members\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/food/food/rapidalert/members_en.htm).

## **The system**

### **RASFF notifications**

RASFF notifications usually report on risks identified in food, feed or food contact materials that are placed on the market in the notifying country or detained at an EU point of entry at the border with an EU neighbouring country. The notifying country reports on the risks it has identified, the product and its traceability and the measures it has taken.

According to the seriousness of the risks identified and the distribution of the product on the market, the RASFF notification is classified after verification by the Commission contact point as alert, information or border rejection notification before the Commission contact point transmits it to all network members.

- **alert notifications**

An ‘alert notification’ or ‘alert’ is sent when a food, feed or food contact material presenting a serious risk is on the market and when rapid action is or might be required in another country than the notifying country. Alerts are triggered by the member of the network that detects the problem and has initiated the relevant measures, such as withdrawal or recall. The notification aims at giving all the members of the network the information to verify whether the concerned product is on their market, so that they can take the necessary measures.

Products subject to an alert notification have been withdrawn or are in the process of being withdrawn from the market. Member States have their own mechanisms to carry out such actions, including the provision of detailed information through the media if necessary.

- **information notifications**

An ‘information notification’ concerns a food, feed or food contact material for which a risk has been identified that does not require rapid action either because the risk is not considered serious or the product is not on the market at the time of notification.

Commission Regulation (EU) No 16/2011 has added two new sub-types of information notification to the family of notifications:

- ‘information notifications for follow-up’ are related to a product that is or may be placed on the market in another member country
- ‘information notifications for attention’ are related to a product that:
  - (i) is present only in the notifying member country; or
  - (ii) has not been placed on the market; or
  - (iii) is no longer on the market

- **border rejection notifications**

A 'border rejection notification' concerns a consignment of food, feed or food contact material that was refused entry into the Community for reason of a risk to human health and also to animal health or to the environment if it concerns feed.

- **original notifications and follow-up notifications**

A RASFF notification referring to one or more consignments of a food, feed or food contact material that were not previously notified to the RASFF is an 'original' notification, classified as alert, information or border rejection notification. In reaction to such notification, members of the network can transmit 'follow-up' notifications which refer to the same consignments and which add information to the original notification such as information on hazards, product traceability or measures taken.

- **rejected and withdrawn notifications**

An original notification sent by a member of the RASFF can be **rejected** from transmission through the RASFF system, as proposed by the Commission after verification and in agreement with the notifying country, if the criteria for notification are not met or if the information transmitted is insufficient.

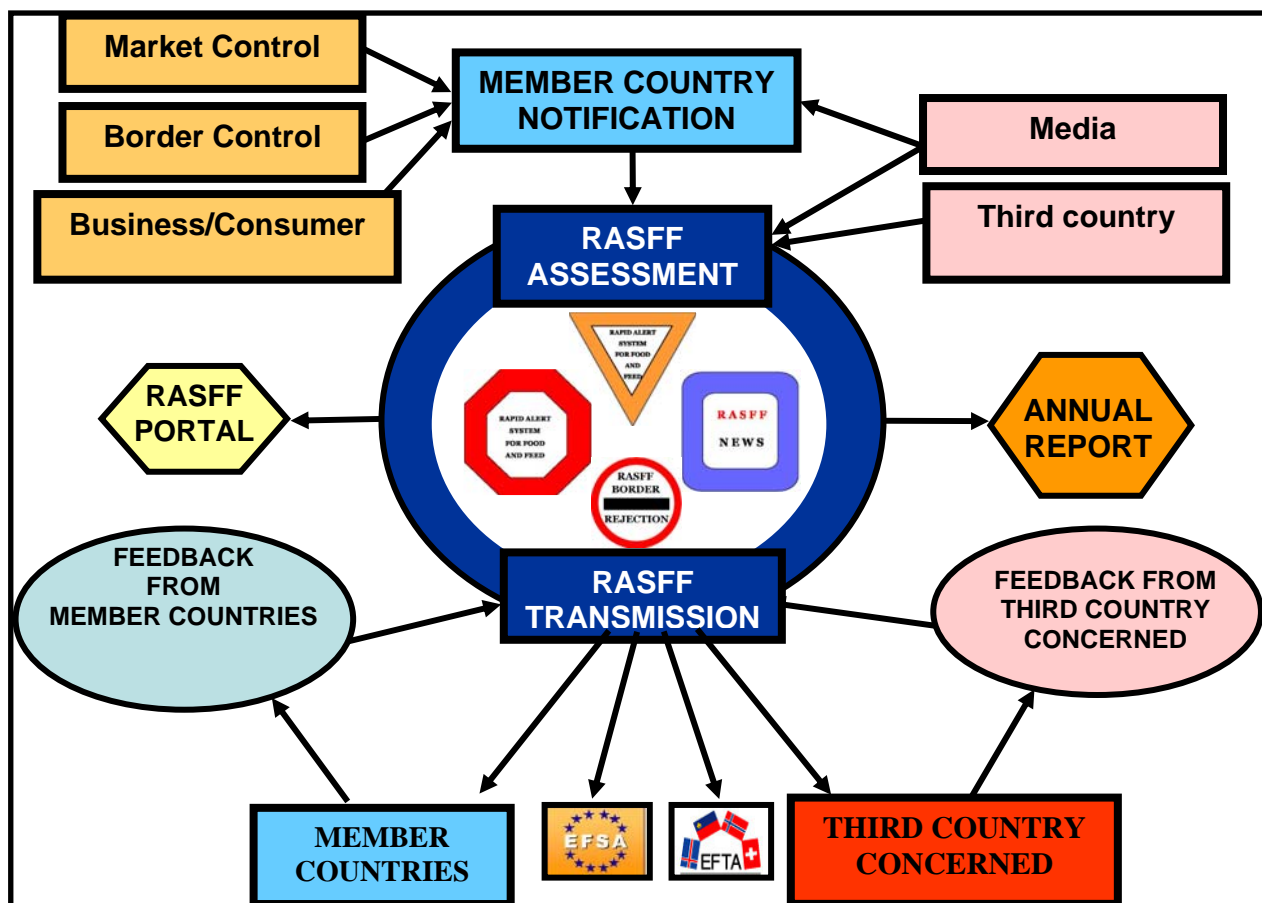
An original notification that was transmitted through the RASFF can be **withdrawn** by the Commission in agreement with the notifying country if the information, upon which the measures taken are based, turns out to be unfounded or if the transmission of the notification was made erroneously.

## **RASFF news**

A 'RASFF news' concerns any type of information related to the safety of food or feed which has not been communicated as an alert, information or border rejection notification, but which is judged interesting for the food and feed control authorities in member countries.

RASFF news are often based on information picked up in the media or forwarded by colleagues in food or feed authorities in third countries, EC delegations or international organisations, after having been verified with any member countries concerned.

Schematic representation of the information flow of the RASFF:



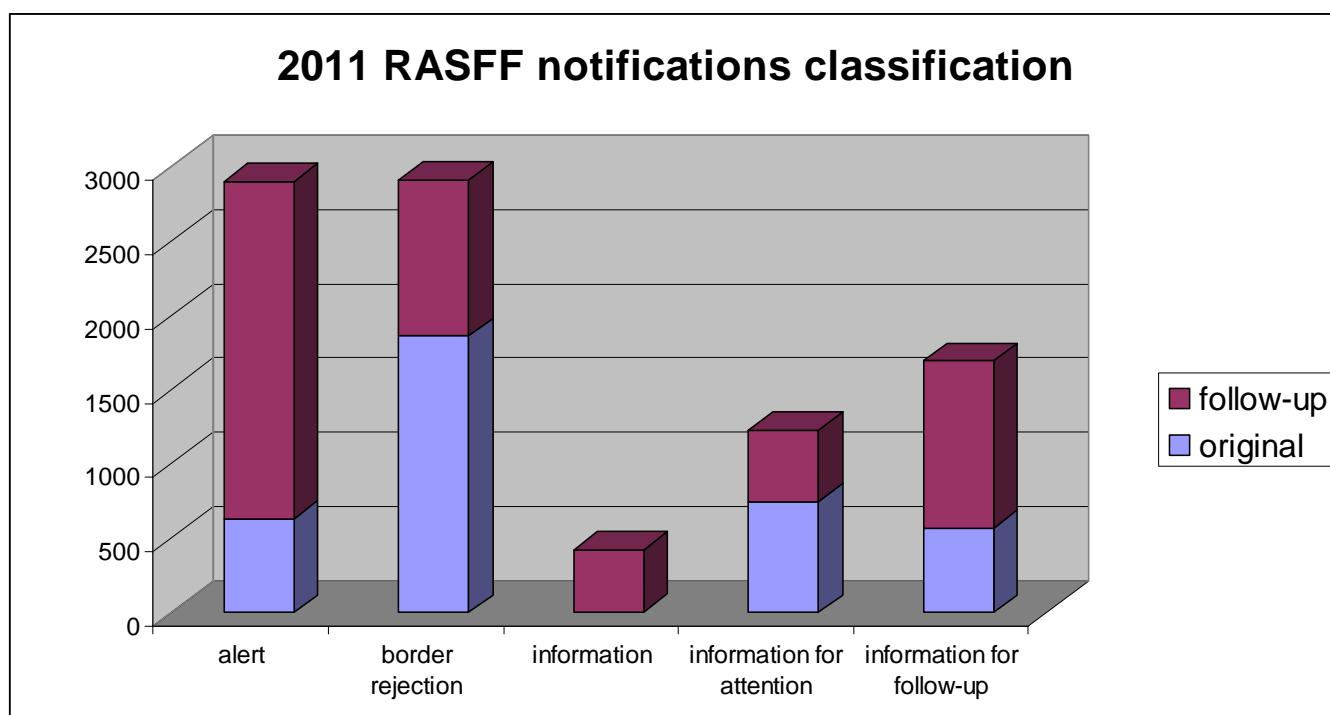
## 2. RASFF notifications in 2011

In 2011, a total of 3812 [original notifications](#) were transmitted through the RASFF, of which 635 were classified as [alert](#), 573 as [information](#) for follow-up, 744 as information for attention and 1860 as [border rejection](#) notification. These original notifications gave rise to 5345 [follow-up](#) notifications, representing on average about 1.4 follow-ups per original notification.

These figures represent a 13.5% increase in original notifications and less importantly, a 2.3% increase in follow-up notifications; resulting in an overall increase of 6.7%.

The RASFF [news](#) transmitted internally in the network are not counted in the above figures nor represented in the charts in this report. There have been 20 RASFF news sent together with 120 follow-ups.

## 2011 RASFF notifications classification



After receipt of follow-up information, 18 alert, 32 information and 32 border rejection notifications were withdrawn. Notifications that were [withdrawn](#) are further excluded from statistics and charts.

The European Commission decided, after consulting the notifying countries, not to upload 94 notifications onto the system since, after evaluation, they were found not to satisfy the criteria for a RASFF notification ([rejected notifications](#)).

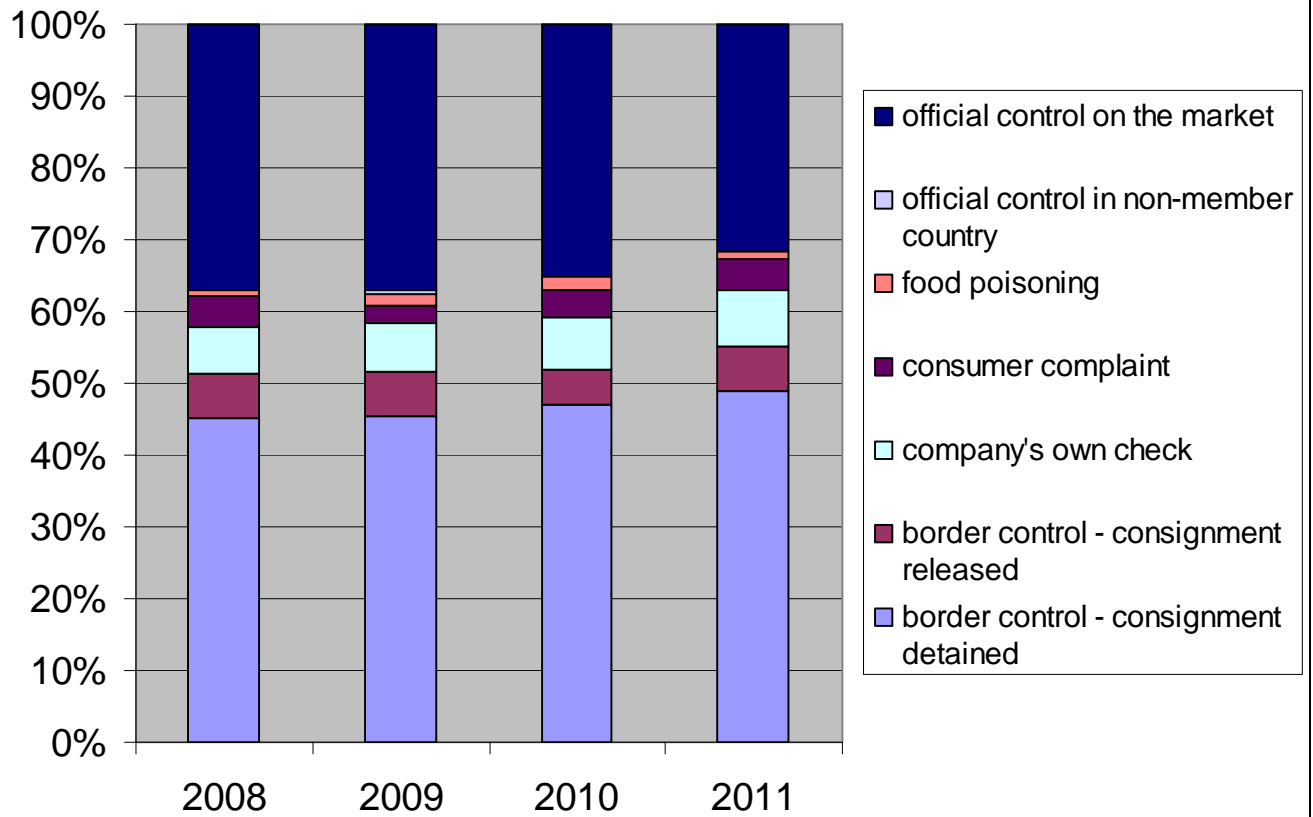
RASFF notifications are triggered by a variety of things. Most notifications concern controls at the outer EEA borders<sup>1</sup> in points of entry or border inspection posts when the consignment was not accepted for import (“border control – consignment detained”). In some cases, a sample was taken for analysis at the border (screening) and the consignment was released (“border control - consignment released”). The second largest category of notifications concerns official controls on the internal market<sup>2</sup>. Three special types of notifications are identified: when a consumer complaint, a company notifying the outcome of an own-check, or a food poisoning was at the basis of the notification.

A small number of notifications are triggered by an official control in a non-member country. If a non-member country informs a RASFF member of a risk found during its official controls concerning a product that may be on the market in one of the member countries, the RASFF member may notify this to the Commission for transmission to the RASFF network. In 2011 there were only two such notifications: an information notification followed from information given by Australia, regarding *Listeria monocytogenes* in a French cheese, notified by France and an official control in South Korea leading to a notification by Italy on aflatoxins in pistachio paste.

<sup>1</sup> Since 2009, including Switzerland for products of animal origin

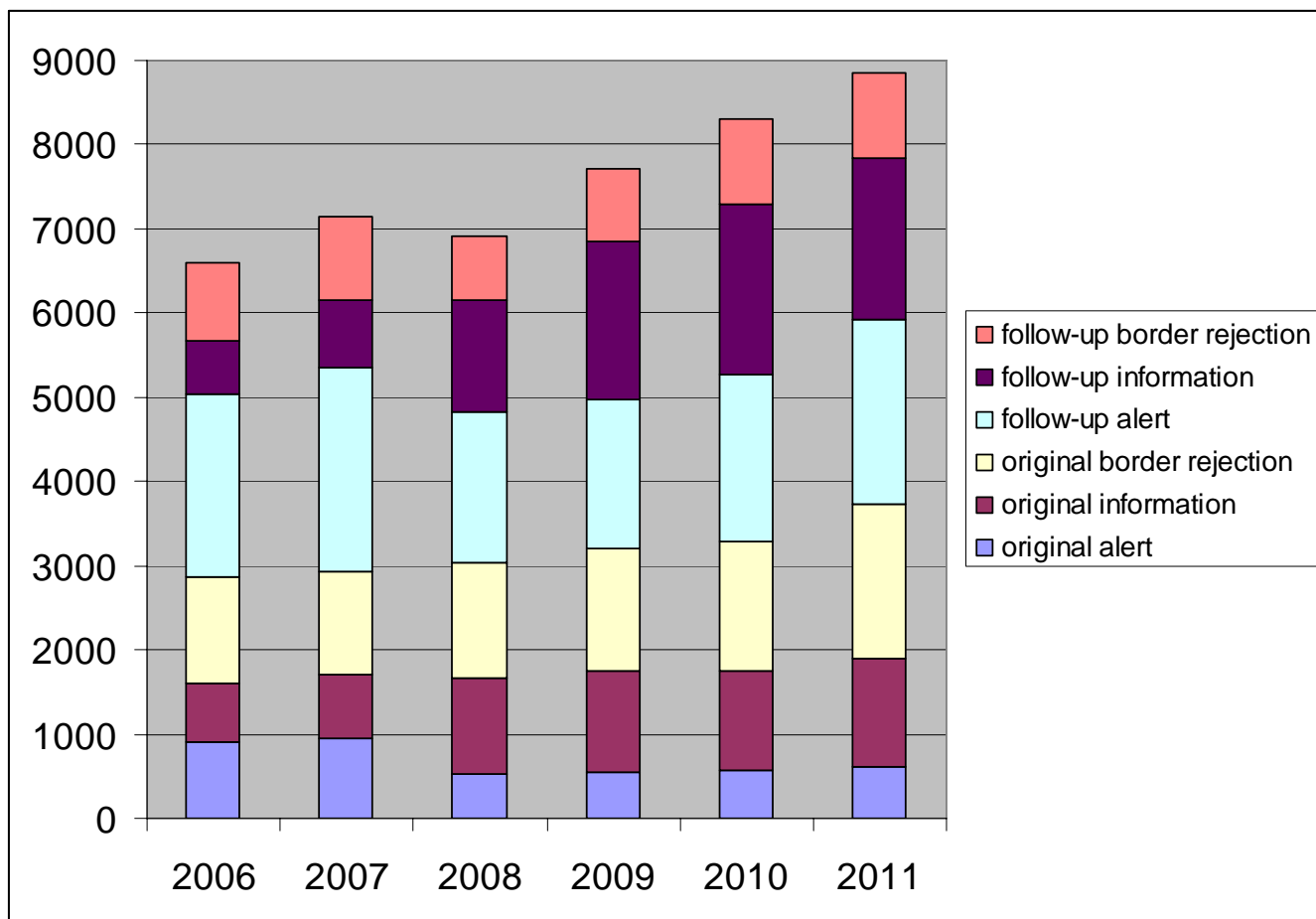
<sup>2</sup> Products placed on the market in one of the member countries including the EEA countries Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland

## Notification basis 2008-2011



## Evolution of the number of notifications since 2006:

### - by notification classification



year	original			follow-up		
	alert	information	border rejection	alert	information	border rejection
2006	910	687	1274	2157	640	923
2007	952	761	1211	2440	796	978
2008	528	1138	1377	1789	1329	743
2009	557	1191	1456	1775	1861	871
2010	576	1168	1554	1977	2027	1014
2011	617	1285	1828	2185	1920	1017
%	+7.1	+10.0	+17.8	+10.5	-5.3	+0.3



**- by notifying country**

country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Austria	22	71	62	87	110	89
Belgium	76	80	98	107	117	95
Bulgaria	-	-	10	22	26	34
Commission Services	1	3	8	6	23	12
Cyprus	60	41	52	65	53	52
Czech Republic	45	76	73	55	68	90
Denmark	48	113	130	127	123	131
Estonia	26	25	17	11	13	18
Finland	75	79	82	93	141	130
France	115	94	124	137	157	171
Germany	528	422	376	438	413	398
Greece	89	110	170	106	161	159
Hungary	42	33	29	17	10	20
Iceland	13	3	4	1	1	2
Ireland	17	14	24	27	30	35
Italy	684	555	501	470	467	551
Latvia	23	19	13	32	14	21
Lithuania	58	27	40	50	33	48
Luxembourg	7	7	10	11	16	23
Malta	28	16	38	30	18	12
Netherlands	147	163	156	247	212	215
Norway	101	54	68	50	30	24
Poland	38	103	123	156	141	140
Portugal	17	20	25	14	8	18
Romania	-	-	7	13	18	25
Slovakia	40	49	61	56	52	56
Slovenia	82	61	47	76	73	56
Spain	418	225	169	142	255	285
Sweden	45	61	55	50	60	74
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	4	7
United Kingdom	314	351	361	348	335	321
<b>total</b>	<b>3159</b>	<b>2875</b>	<b>2933</b>	<b>3044</b>	<b>3182</b>	<b>3313</b>

## 2011 notifications by hazard category, by classification and by basis

hazard category	classification				notification basis						
	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up	border control - consignment detained	border control - consignment released	official control on the market	company's own check	consumer complaint	food poisoning	official control in non-member country
adulteration / fraud	4	67	9	16	67	4	21	3	1		
allergens	68	1	18	6	1	1	56	22	12	1	
biocontaminants	10	15	10		15	7	8	1	1	3	
biotoxins (other)	13		4	35			16	2	32	2	
chemical contamination (other)	4		1	2			1	2	4		
composition	33	86	49	47	86	10	105	4	9	1	
feed additives		1		3	1		3				
food additives and flavourings	14	56	35	47	57	12	76	4	3		
foreign bodies	38	119	22	47	119		27	22	58		
GMO / novel food	11	17	11	16	18	2	33		2		
heavy metals	71	107	88	24	107	31	137	14	1		
industrial contaminants	39	8	21	25	8	3	68	13		1	
labelling absent/incomplete/incorrect	2	16	2	6	16		6	2	1	1	
migration	50	63	40	35	63	3	121	1			
mycotoxins	64	514	46	7	512	14	84	20			1
non-pathogenic micro-organisms	3	76	8	28	74	6	15	10	9	1	
not determined / other	2	34	1	4	34		3	1	2	1	
organoleptic aspects	2	87	18	27	87	1	22	5	19		
packaging defective / incorrect	2	16	2	7	16		5	2	4		
parasitic infestation	29	59	14	17	59	5	43	7	5		
pathogenic micro-organisms	150	114	201	134	113	91	244	116	3	31	1
pesticide residues	17	219	99	28	220	22	88	32	1		
poor or insufficient controls	5	177	2	6	177		8	2	3		
radiation	1	12	14	7	12	9	13				

hazard category	classification				notification basis						
	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up	border control - consignment detained	border control - consignment released	official control on the market	company's own check	consumer complaint	food poisoning	official control in non-member country
residues of veterinary medicinal products	11	46	27	5	46	16	25	2			
TSEs				2			2				

## 2011 notifications by product category and by classification

product category	classification				total 2011	2010	2009	2008
	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up				
alcoholic beverages	7	2	3	2	14	7	3	2
bivalve molluscs and products thereof	23	28	15	2	68	78	52	45
cephalopods and products thereof	5	66	8	2	81	44	39	18
cereals and bakery products	57	64	35	25	181	172	165	159
cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	13	16	10	7	46	33	74	48
compound feeds	2		3	9	14	7	12	
confectionery	16	32	7	12	67	50	60	95
crustaceans and products thereof	7	42	24	5	78	78	176	127
dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	40	26	21	49	136	141	119	77
eggs and egg products	4	2	1	6	13	16	15	9
fats and oils	5	11	5		21	25	21	23
feed additives		3	5	5	13	7	8	7
feed for food-producing animals		2			2			122
feed materials	13	133	52	63	261	110	122	
feed premixtures	1		3	2	6	4	4	
fish and fish products	95	217	103	76	491	452	445	255
food additives and flavourings	3	4			7	1	5	8
food contact materials	61	125	78	47	311	231	192	197
fruits and vegetables	61	360	192	57	670	495	404	439
herbs and spices	26	116	46	10	198	222	129	101
honey and royal jelly	1	2	2	5	10	16	14	38

product category	classification				total 2011	2010	2009	2008
	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up				
ices and desserts	4			3	7	6	5	6
meat and meat products (other than poultry)	61	50	29	32	172	203	137	126
milk and milk products	22	4	5	20	51	76	38	62
natural mineral water		3	1	4	8	6	2	9
non-alcoholic beverages	2	15	6	8	31	36	28	38
nuts, nut products and seeds	30	424	21	51	526	539	675	774
other food product / mixed	1	6	12	2	21	14	5	20
pet food	3	40	7	13	63	56	49	52
poultry meat and poultry meat products	20	14	17	21	72	75	94	118
prepared dishes and snacks	14	6	8	5	33	24	36	26
soups, broths, sauces and condiments	19	15	7	11	52	54	39	27
water for human consumption (other)	1		2	1	4	5	3	6
wine			1	1	2	1	1	2

## 2011 - top 10 number of notifications

Number of notifications counted for each combination of hazard/product category/country.

### - by origin

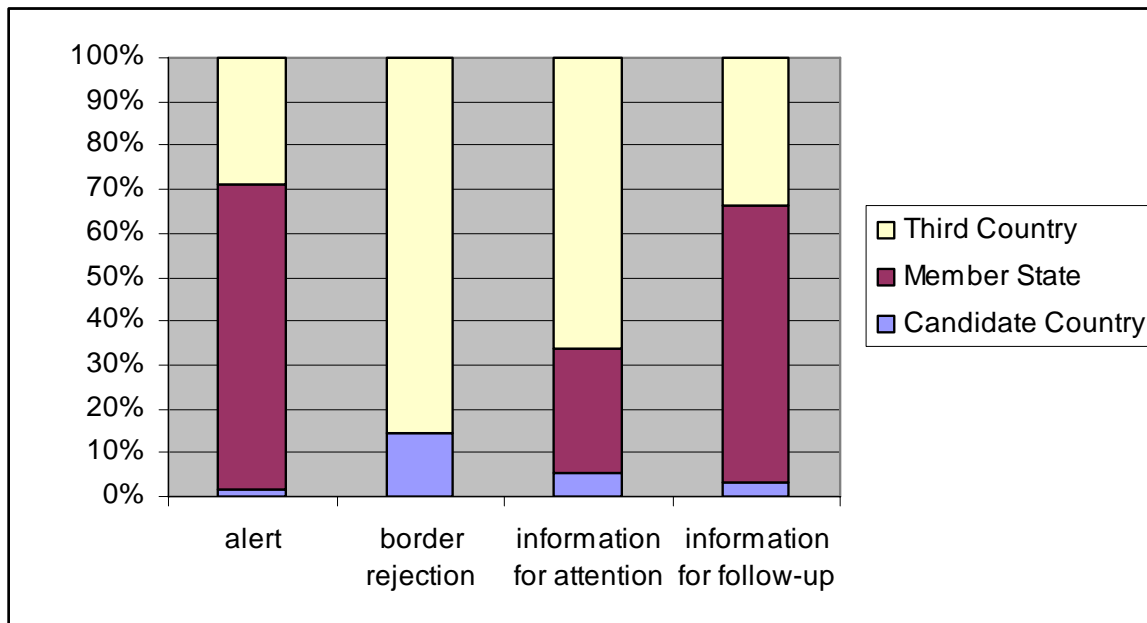
	hazard	product category	origin	notifications
1	aflatoxins	feed materials	India	80
2	aflatoxins	fruits and vegetables	Turkey	75
3	aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	China	60
4	Salmonella spp.	fruits and vegetables	Bangladesh	54
5	aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Turkey	53
6	migration of chromium	food contact materials	China	48
7	migration of formaldehyde	food contact materials	China	45
8	living and dead mites	nuts, nut products and seeds	Ukraine	43
9	aflatoxins	herbs and spices	India	40
10	aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Iran	39

### - by notifying country

	hazard	product category	notifier	notifications
1	aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Germany	77
2	aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	The Netherlands	72
3	aflatoxins	feed materials	United Kingdom	62
4	living and dead mites	nuts, nut products and seeds	Poland	61
5	Salmonella spp.	fruits and vegetables	United kingdom	61
6	migration of chromium	food contact materials	Italy	51
7	poor temperature control - rupture of the cold chain	fish and fish products	Spain	50
8	mercury	fish and fish products	Italy	44
9	aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	United kingdom	43
10	parasitic infestation with Anisakis	fish and fish products	Italy	40

## Notifications – country of origin

### 2011 Notifications by country type (origin)



### 2000-2011 notifications by world region

