



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Crisis management in food, animals and plants
Alerts, traceability and committees

RASFF

Preliminary Annual Report

2016

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, EFSA¹, EEA² 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.

¹ European Food Safety Authority, www.efsa.europa.eu

² 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.

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.

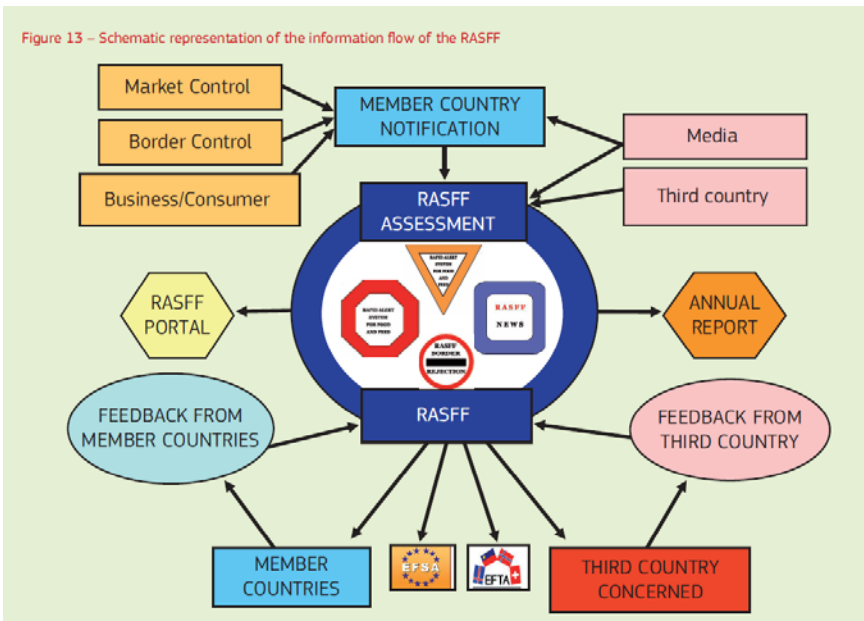
RASFF news

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:

Figure 13 – Schematic representation of the information flow of the RASFF



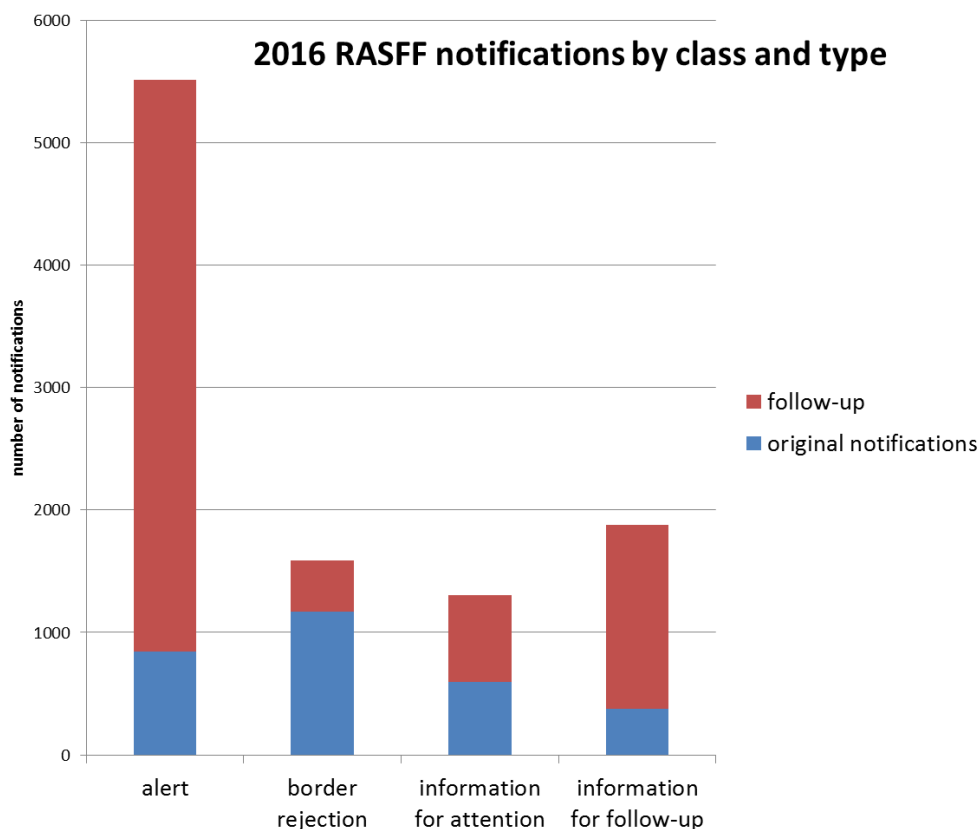
2. RASFF notifications in 2016

In 2016, a total of 2993 original notifications were transmitted through the RASFF, of which 847 were classified as alert, 378 as information for follow-up, 598 as information for attention and 1170 as border rejection notification. These original notifications gave rise to 7288 follow-up notifications, representing an average of 2.4 follow-ups per original notification. For alert notifications this average rises to an impressive 5.5 follow-ups per original notification. Compared to 2015, the number of alert notifications, implying a serious health risk of a product circulating on the market, rose by 9% with 16% more follow-up transmitted.

The overall figures present a 1.8% decrease in original notifications compared to 2015 but a 17.5% increase in follow-up notifications, resulting in an overall increase of 11.1%.

Details of these trends are given on page 9. For original notifications, the focus is shifting to alert notifications. The number of border rejections has been declining since 2011, except in 2015. The increase in alerts (both follow-ups and original notifications) is significant for the third year in a row, contrasting with decreasing numbers in other notification categories. This demonstrates that members of the network are progressively focusing their efforts on cases where serious risks with products placed on the market require rapid action to be taken, thereby increasing the efficiency of the network.

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 163 follow-ups. Due to a significant increase in follow-ups, this means that information transmitted as RASFF news increased by 65% compared to 2015.



After receipt of follow-up information, 26 alert, 27 information and 10 border rejection notifications were withdrawn. Notifications that were withdrawn are further excluded from tables and charts.

The European Commission decided, after consulting the notifying countries, not to upload 205 notifications onto the system because, after evaluation, they were found not to satisfy the criteria for a RASFF notification (rejected notifications). This represents a 130% increase compared to 2015. This can be explained through the application of the new RASFF Working Instruction (WI) 2.2. on the “Calculation of consumer intake and evaluation of the risk for pesticide residues” which caused the Commission’s contact point to propose rejection of a much higher number of notifications on pesticide residues.

RASFF notifications are triggered by a variety of things. Just under half of the total number of notifications concern controls at the outer EEA borders¹ 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 but the consignment was not held there but was forwarded to its destination under customs' seals (“border control – consignment under customs”). This means that it should remain stored there until the result of the analysis is available. In other cases the consignment was released (“border control - consignment released”) without awaiting the analytical result, which means that the consignment would need to be retraced if the result is unfavourable and the product needs to be withdrawn from the market.

The largest category of notifications concerns official controls on the internal market². 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.

¹ Since 2009, including Switzerland.

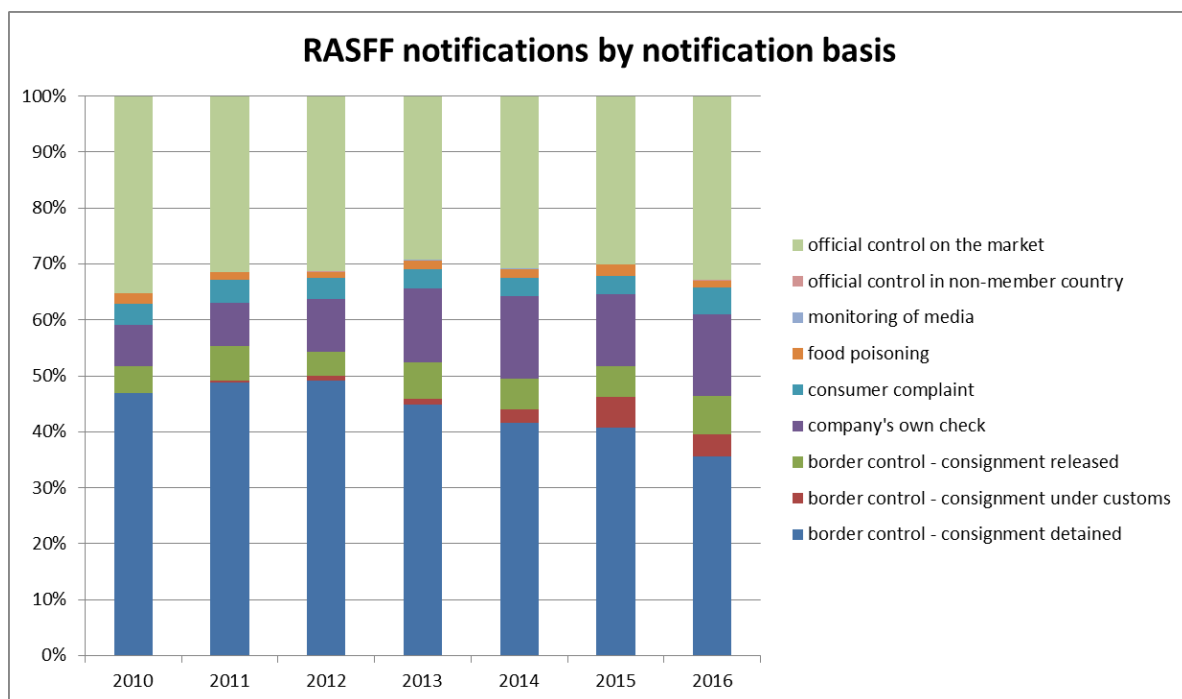
² Products placed on the market in one of the member countries including the EEA countries Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.

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 2016 there were three RASFF notifications and four RASFF news items reporting on checks carried out in third countries. A little context regarding some of the notifications and news items transmitted:

- Three RASFF news items related to procedures set up by non-member countries for commodities for which conditions were set for import following findings of non-compliance indicating a health risk. Updates under such RASFF news items circulate lists with authorised signatures for these certificates allowing verification of the certificate’s authenticity.
- The United Kingdom sent two RASFF notifications based on information received from the US FDA on products suspected of contamination with *Listeria monocytogenes*: a snack product and a frozen vegetable mix, in the latter case following an outbreak in the US. In the former case, the contamination was found on a particular ingredient of the product: sunflower kernels, which led to a recall of a variety of products produced with it.
- RASFF alert 2016.1100 - Israel had informed the Commission’s RASFF contact point of a suspicion of Salmonella in various hoomous products produced in Israel. Information was received on distribution of these products in several Member States but also to countries that are not member of RASFF which were then informed by the Commission’s RASFF contact point. More information, requested by RASFF members about the measures taken and analytical results was however not obtained from the Israeli contact point.

All information on the RASFF can be found on the website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/index_en.htm

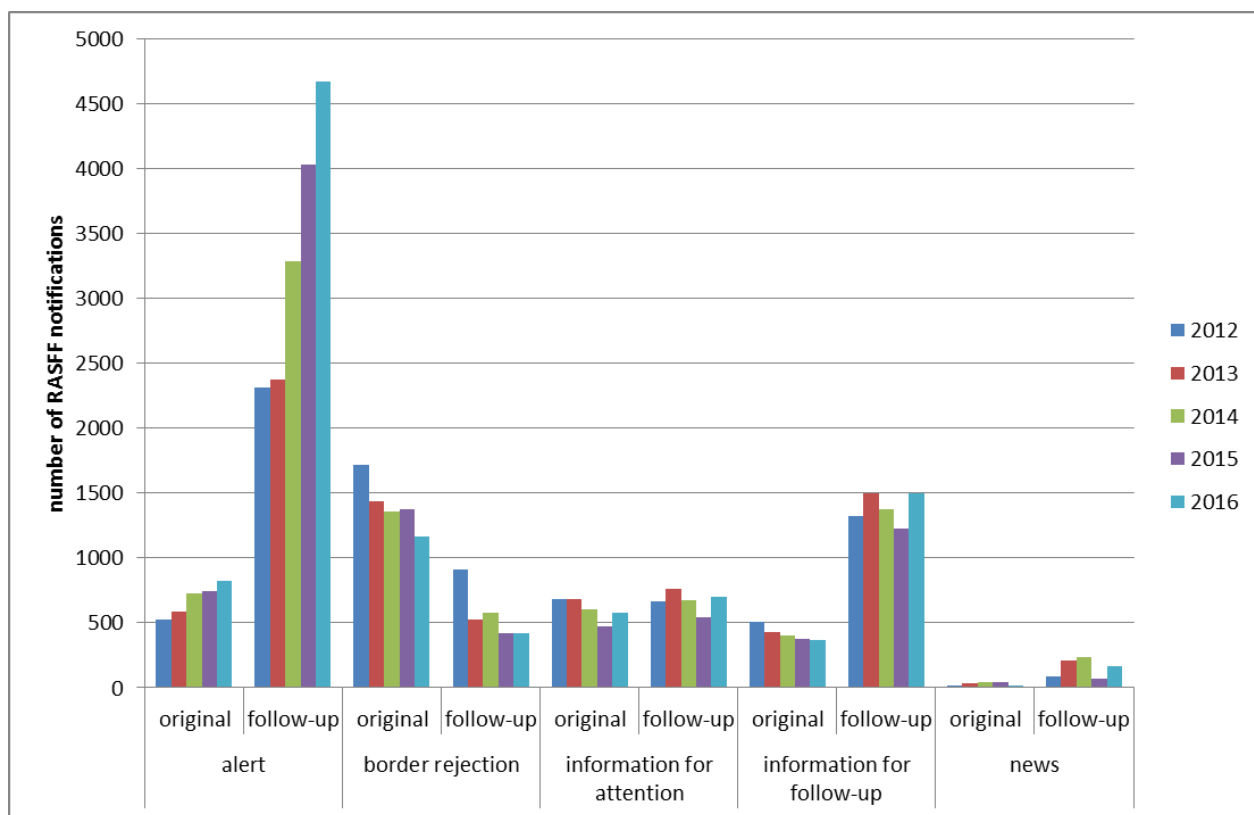


3 Charts and figures

Evolution of the number of notifications since 2012:

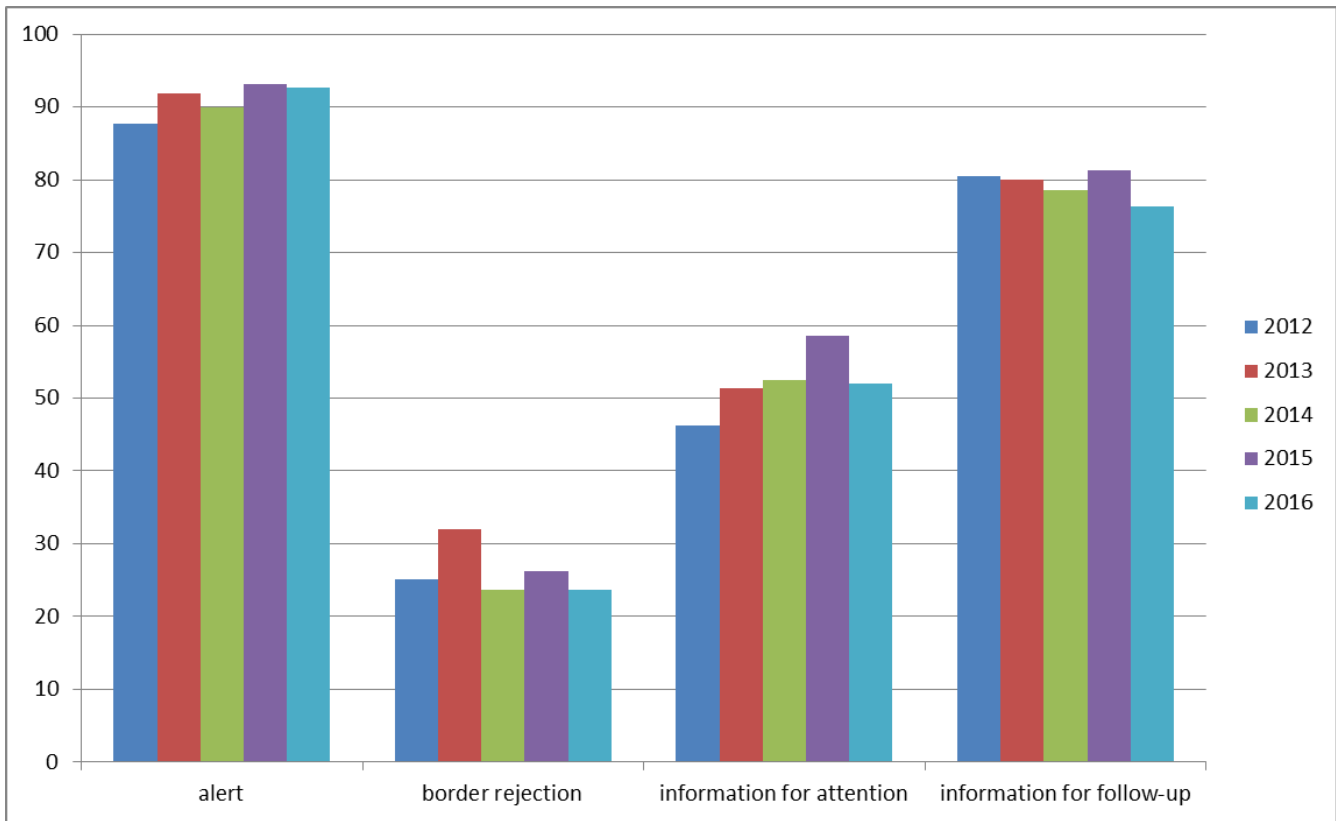
- by notification classification

year	alert		border rejection		information for attention		information for follow-up	
	original	follow-up	original	follow-up	original	follow-up	original	follow-up
2012	523	2312	1712	906	679	664	507	1325
2013	584	2376	1438	525	679	763	429	1493
2014	725	3280	1357	581	605	670	402	1377
2015	748	4028	1376	417	475	538	378	1222
2016	821	4666	1160	421	578	704	371	1497



The chart shows clearly that growth in RASFF is very particularly in alert notifications, and especially on follow-ups to alerts. This had for effect that more than half of the RASFF notifications exchanged in 2016 related to alerts.

The chart below shows original notifications with follow-up. These are original notifications to which at least one follow-up was given.



The chart shows that although the number of follow-ups as a whole significantly rose in 2016, there are still a significant number of notifications that were not followed up at all. Especially in the category alert, the objective is to reach 100%. The numbers for 2016 will end somewhat higher than shown here considering that follow-ups are still coming in to 2016 notifications.

- by notifying member

Original notifications

Evolution of original notifications by notifying member

<i>country</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>
Austria	87	110	88	65	49	46	46	56	46
Belgium	107	117	94	128	143	164	198	179	129
Bulgaria	22	26	33	116	75	54	87	99	92
Commission Services	6	22	12	4	1	1			1
Croatia						8	11	20	28
Cyprus	65	53	52	76	47	44	55	39	29
Czech Republic	55	68	90	96	71	70	70	56	79
Denmark	127	122	131	151	130	112	99	94	80
Estonia	11	13	18	9	17	32	12	17	15
Finland	93	141	130	111	105	88	98	55	57
France	137	157	171	199	275	249	266	235	194
Germany	438	412	396	416	362	331	330	275	369
Greece	106	160	157	128	65	65	60	64	57
Hungary	17	10	20	13	10	3	15	9	20
Iceland	1	1	2	6	3	1	1	4	1
Ireland	27	30	33	49	53	40	42	57	31
Italy	470	466	541	544	515	528	503	506	417
Latvia	32	14	21	17	26	27	20	42	28
Lithuania	50	33	48	39	51	28	36	30	42
Luxembourg	11	16	23	25	8	17	12	13	13
Malta	30	18	12	27	11	12	8	13	15
Netherlands	246	212	214	202	173	264	252	258	287
Norway	50	30	23	51	61	45	44	31	67
Poland	156	141	140	226	180	120	132	90	74
Portugal	14	8	18	22	28	40	38	30	33
Romania	13	18	25	21	14	14	17	23	16
Slovakia	56	52	56	35	35	35	38	34	40
Slovenia	76	73	56	45	43	34	30	39	32
Spain	141	255	285	300	239	200	189	174	148
Sweden	50	60	73	72	95	91	67	74	94
Switzerland		4	7	6	20	40	34	24	47
United Kingdom	346	334	319	509	516	327	279	337	349

Follow-up notifications

Evolution of follow-up notifications by notifying member

<i>country</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>% change</i>
Austria	52	197	71	118	79	80	117	188	202	7
Belgium	135	178	117	158	210	240	297	262	290	10
Bulgaria	28	44	57	56	60	106	147	143	187	24
Commission Services	177	196	307	346	340	421	424	426	352	-21
Croatia	3	1	3		2	15	31	31	66	53
Cyprus	72	57	68	47	76	73	62	78	85	8
Czech Republic	105	194	185	199	163	210	232	190	230	17
Denmark	110	118	95	160	131	179	207	198	180	-10
Estonia	7	4	17	24	23	46	60	65	75	13
European Food Safety Authority							2			
Finland	13	25	23	19	23	64	97	94	98	4
France	272	256	556	361	283	242	325	359	453	21
Germany	423	489	452	519	409	376	512	483	597	19
Greece	60	132	113	118	98	66	74	91	87	-5
Hungary	51	95	85	103	120	91	143	90	207	57
Iceland	2	1	1	5			4	6	12	50
Ireland	46	27	43	60	72	154	130	115	143	20
Italy	321	413	520	654	486	439	433	587	693	15
Latvia	16	30	32	40	36	43	68	58	64	9
Liechtenstein						3		1		
Lithuania	21	26	51	55	72	69	70	59	89	34
Luxembourg	33	11	15	16	8	30	37	37	48	23
Malta	33	44	43	24	32	43	42	77	96	20
Netherlands	180	149	155	135	180	222	265	364	497	27
Norway	22	41	44	49	58	44	58	67	98	32
Poland	137	154	154	202	313	415	420	343	412	17
Portugal	31	28	42	25	74	85	109	138	96	-44
Romania	27	40	48	63	85	76	137	127	123	-3
Slovakia	49	44	68	69	76	59	70	74	86	14
Slovenia	35	93	42	47	86	44	68	76	100	24
Spain	911	999	1288	1077	1058	706	719	648	733	12
Sweden	54	60	83	84	95	161	155	201	211	5
Switzerland	49	51	70	62	87	85	105	138	176	22
United Kingdom	118	168	125	152	182	141	109	219	382	43

2016 notifications by hazard category and by classification

<i>hazard category</i>	<i>alert</i>	<i>border rejection</i>	<i>information for attention</i>	<i>information for follow-up</i>
adulteration / fraud		107	1	4
allergens	87	4	16	6
biocontaminants	18	6	22	
biotoxins (other)	12		6	1
chemical contamination (other)			1	1
composition	93	15	35	36
feed additives	1			2
food additives and flavourings	41	62	43	22
foreign bodies	76	14	10	34
GMO / novel food	12	11	18	52
heavy metals	78	57	71	12
industrial contaminants	23	14	19	5
labelling absent/incomplete/incorrect	8	5	7	8
migration	9	40	18	11
mycotoxins	82	418	49	2
non-pathogenic micro-organisms	2	22	8	30
not determined / other	4	3	2	1
organoleptic aspects	2	27	3	8
packaging defective / incorrect	5	15	1	4
parasitic infestation		3	11	9
pathogenic micro-organisms	250	159	183	93
pesticide residues	38	142	62	11
poor or insufficient controls	2	78	4	13
radiation		1	2	2
residues of veterinary medicinal products	10	12	12	13
TSEs			3	5

2016 notifications by product category and by classification

<i>product category</i>	<i>alert</i>	<i>border rejection</i>	<i>information for attention</i>	<i>information for follow-up</i>
alcoholic beverages	5		1	2
animal by-products		2		
bivalve molluscs and products thereof	42	10	32	
cephalopods and products thereof	3	21	15	
cereals and bakery products	74	16	8	14
cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	21	27	2	8
compound feeds	3		2	8
confectionery	9	8	5	2
crustaceans and products thereof	6	26	25	12
dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	83	16	32	67
eggs and egg products	8		6	4
fats and oils	10	7	6	
feed additives			1	3
feed materials	9	22	28	79
feed premixtures	1		1	2
fish and fish products	98	102	103	24
food additives and flavourings		4		1
food contact materials	27	62	28	15
fruits and vegetables	100	272	98	27
gastropods		1		
herbs and spices	22	106	41	7
honey and royal jelly	2	1	3	1
ices and desserts	3			
meat and meat products (other than poultry)	75	10	30	32
milk and milk products	39		7	13
natural mineral water	1			
non-alcoholic beverages	5	2	2	5
nuts, nut products and seeds	47	362	25	9
other food product / mixed	7	7	1	3
pet food	14	20	8	8
poultry meat and poultry meat products	70	47	57	10
prepared dishes and snacks	24	5	6	8
soups, broths, sauces and condiments	12	4	4	7
water for human consumption (other)	1		1	

2016 - top 10 number of notifications

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

- by origin

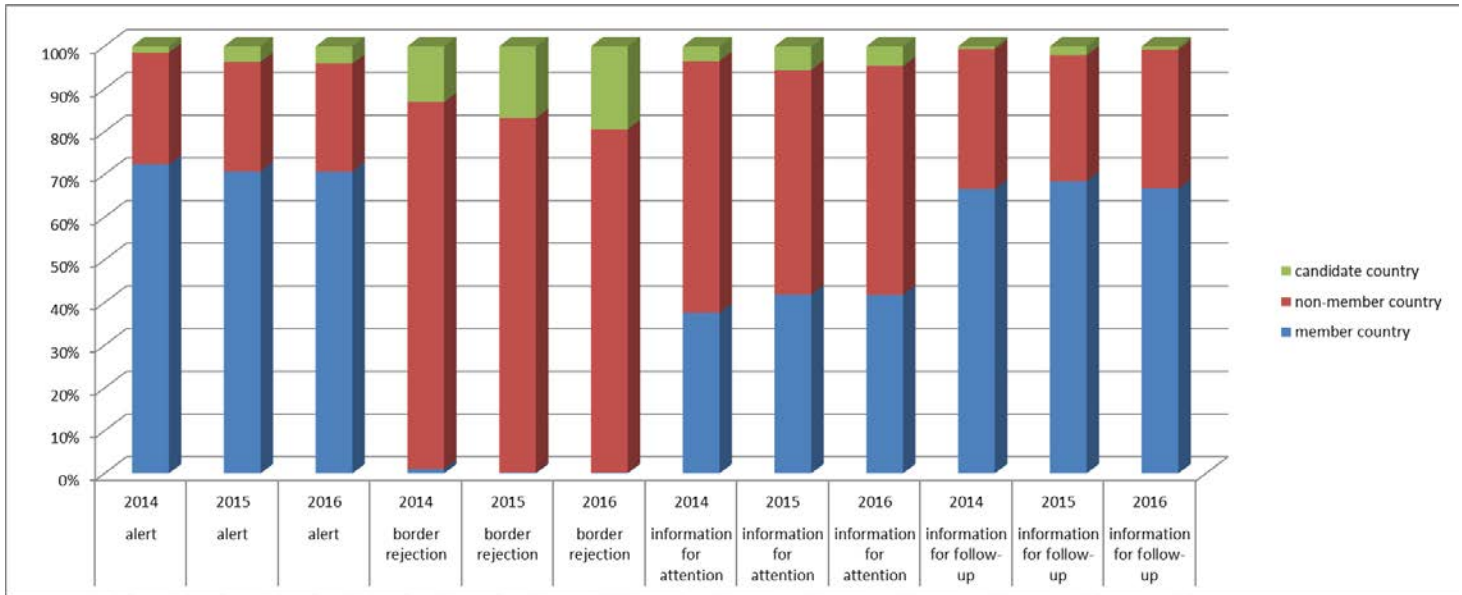
hazard	product category	origin	notifications
pesticide residues	fruits and vegetables	Turkey	77
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Turkey	68
mercury	fish and fish products	Spain	62
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Iran	56
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	China	49
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	United States	45
Salmonella	fruits and vegetables	India	46
aflatoxins	fruits and vegetables	Turkey	40
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Egypt	32
aflatoxins	herbs and spices	India	32

- by notifying country

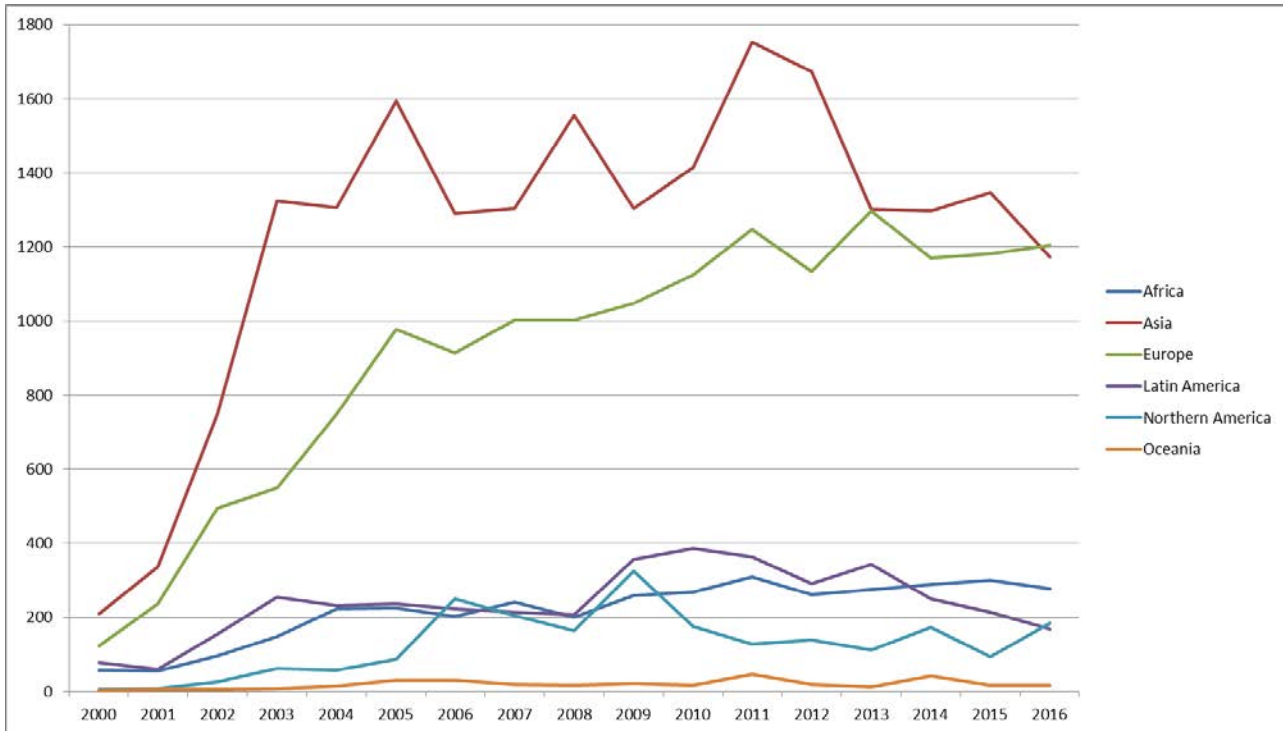
hazard	product category	notifying country	notifications
pesticide residues	fruits and vegetables	Bulgaria	71
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Germany	65
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Netherlands	63
mercury	fish and fish products	Italy	59
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Italy	52
Salmonella	fruits and vegetables	United Kingdom	48
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	United Kingdom	31
Salmonella	poultry meat and poultry meat products	Netherlands	29
too high count of Escherichia coli	bivalve molluscs and products thereof	Italy	28
high content of caffeine	dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	Germany	24
pesticide residues	fruits and vegetables	Netherlands	24

Notifications – country of origin

2014-2016 Notifications by country type (origin)



2000-2016 notifications by world region



2014-2016 notifications by country of origin¹



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

2014-2016 notifications by product category



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

2007-2016 Notifications by hazard category



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

2016 notifications by hazard category and notifying country



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

The coloured cells indicate the country with the highest number of notifications for a given hazard category.

2016 notifications by product category and notifying country



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

The coloured cells indicate the country with the highest number of notifications for a given product category.

¹ Please note that the Excel worksheets shown on the following pages are attached in the PDF document

2016 notifications by product category and type of control



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

2016 non-member countries having provided follow-up



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

The first column "distribution" shows the number of 2015 notifications for each country to which the Commission's Services notified distribution of a product. The second column "origin" shows the number of 2015 notifications for each country to which the Commission's Services notified a product originating from it. The third column "other" gives the number of notifications for which the country was notified for another reason than origin or distribution e.g. if the product transited through the country. The fourth column "follow-ups" shows the number of follow-ups received from each country in 2015.

2016 notifications by hazard category and risk decision



Microsoft Excel
Worksheet

There are three worksheets splitting up the data between FCM, food and feed. Categories coloured red have predominantly notifications with risk decision "serious", whereas categories coloured green have mostly notifications concerning a "non-serious" risk.