



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

**Preliminary Annual Report**

**2015**

# 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.

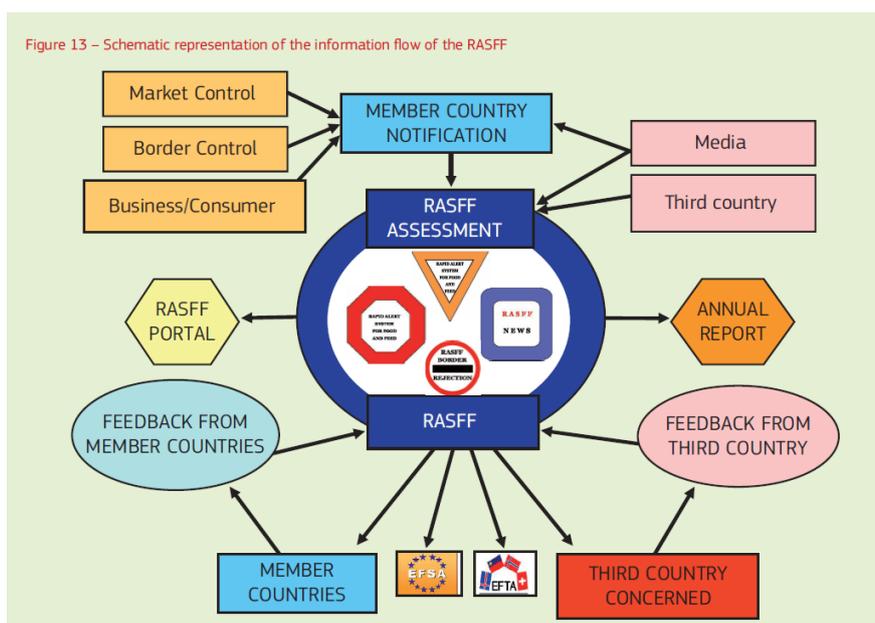
An original notification that was transmitted through the RASFF can be **withdrawn** by the Commission in agreement with the notifying country if the information, upon which the measures taken are based, turns out to be unfounded or if the transmission of the notification was made erroneously.

### 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:



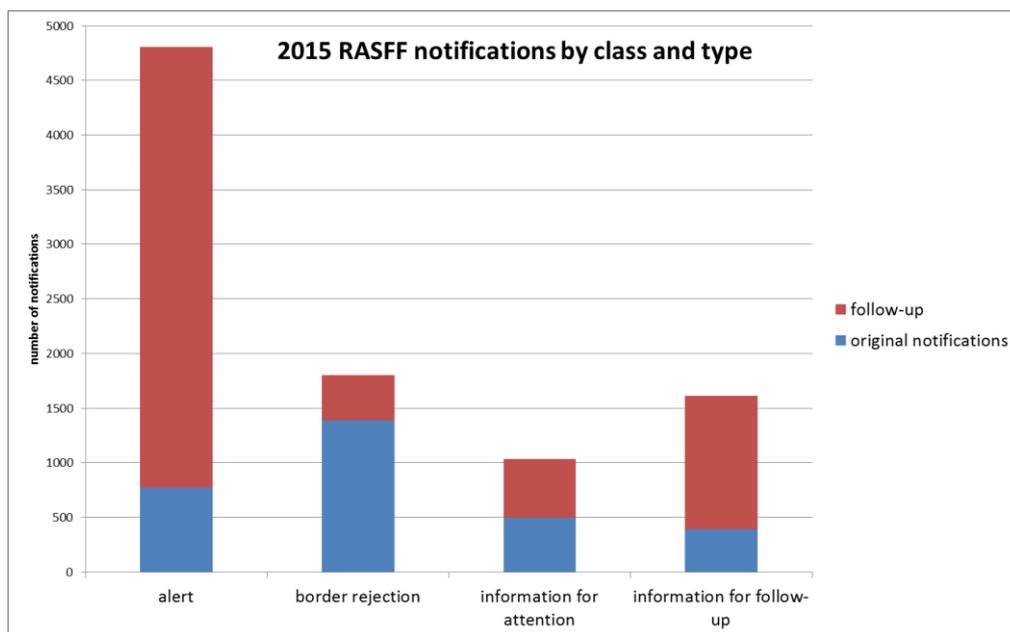
## 2. RASFF notifications in 2015

In 2015, a total of 3049 original notifications were transmitted through the RASFF, of which 775 were classified as alert, 392 as information for follow-up, 495 as information for attention and 1387 as border rejection notification. These original notifications gave rise to 6204 follow-up notifications, representing an average of 2 follow-ups per original notification. For alert notifications this average rises to an impressive 5.2 follow-ups per original notification.

The overall figures present a 3.4% decrease in original notifications compared to 2014 but a 14.6% increase in follow-up notifications, resulting in an overall increase of 5%.

Details of these trends are given on page 7. For original notifications, the focus is shifting to alert notifications. The number of border rejections, declining since 2011, has slightly increased in 2015. For follow-ups the increase for alerts is significant for the second year in a row. 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 41 RASFF news sent together with 72 follow-ups. Due to a significant decrease in follow-ups, this means that information transmitted as RASFF news decreased by 69% compared to 2014.



After receipt of follow-up information, 25 alert, 33 information and 7 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 89 notifications onto the system because, after evaluation, they were found not to satisfy the criteria for a RASFF notification (rejected notifications). This represents a 20% decrease compared to 2014.

RASFF notifications are triggered by a variety of things. Just over half of the total number of 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 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 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 2015 there were four RASFF notifications and four RASFF news transmitted on incidents that took place in third countries. A little context regarding some of the notifications and news transmitted:

- RASFF news 15-768 - unauthorised colour methyl yellow in raw materials and food products from Taiwan: on 5 January the ECCP received an email from the Taiwan Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) reporting on a food incident concerning illegal use of dimethyl yellow in foods from Taiwan. Information was given on distribution of products to German and Swedish FBO. In the days that followed Germany tracked distribution from Germany to Austria and Denmark. On 27 January, the Netherlands notified an alert based on information given by the Dutch importer of various products of bean curd having been adulterated with methyl yellow. Distribution of these products had taken place to 11 other Member States plus Switzerland. With further details provided by the TFDA, products could be withdrawn from the market, for many even before they reached the retailers.
- RASFF news 15-774 – On 21 January the United Kingdom contact point sent a RASFF news about a number of food product recalls in US and Canada of ground cumin and products containing ground cumin, due to contamination with peanut protein and almond protein. The country of origin or cause of the contamination was unknown. The UK requested the ECCP to inform INFOSAN, which it did. After investigation the incidents in the US and in Canada could not be connected to any products on the market in Europe but they did trigger a series of notifications indicating that also in Europe there were worrying issues relating to allergens in spices.
- RASFF alert 2015.0785 – in June, the Japanese authorities informed the Italian authorities of very high levels of *Listeria monocytogenes* in gorgonzola cheese from Italy. Despite a lack of detailed analytical data, the Italian authorities decided to transmit an alert through the RASFF informing 12 countries having received the product. Unfortunately Italy received no further details from the Japanese authorities about the results of their investigation.
- There were two RASFF news made with information from the Russian authorities on 2 consignments with false bills of lading describing a different load than the frozen pork back fat that was found in the containers. A criminal investigation was started.

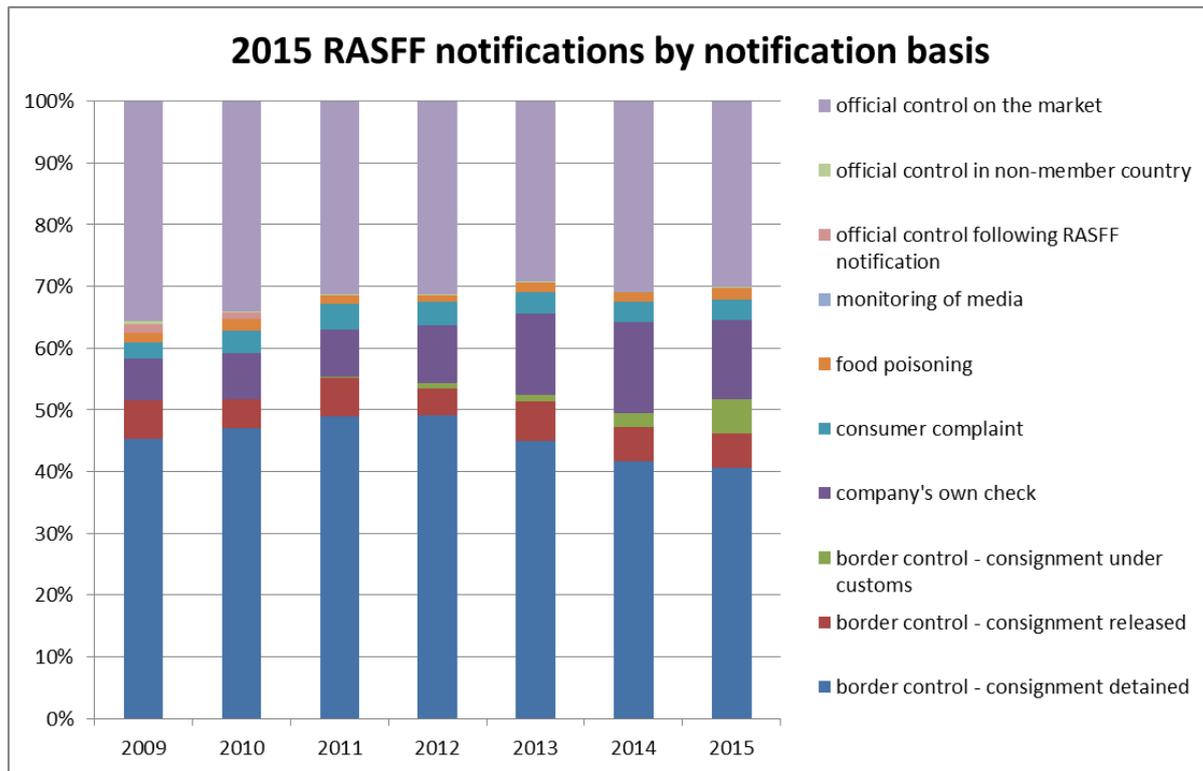
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<sup>1</sup> Since 2009, including Switzerland.

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

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/index_en.htm)

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



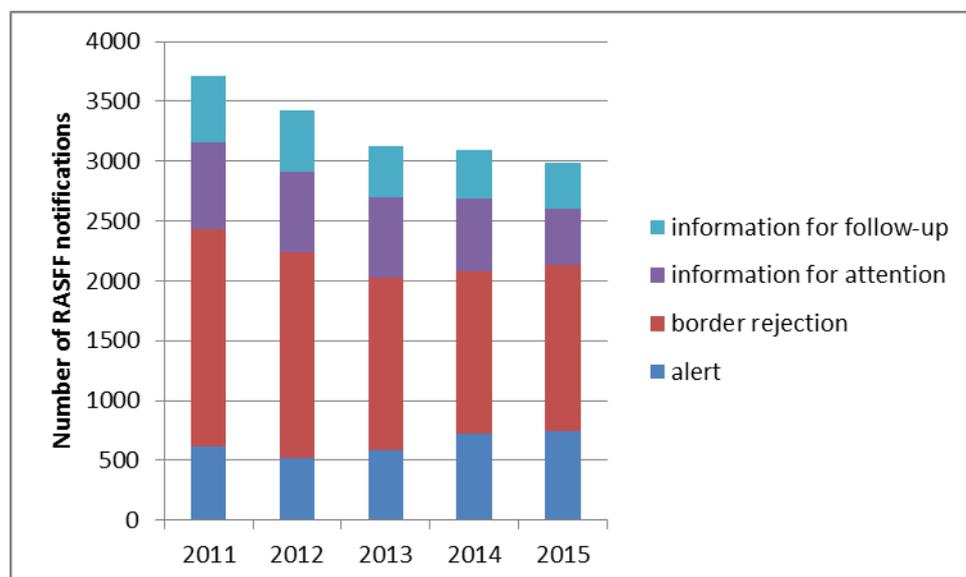
### 3 Charts and figures

#### *Evolution of the number of notifications since 2011:*

- by notification classification

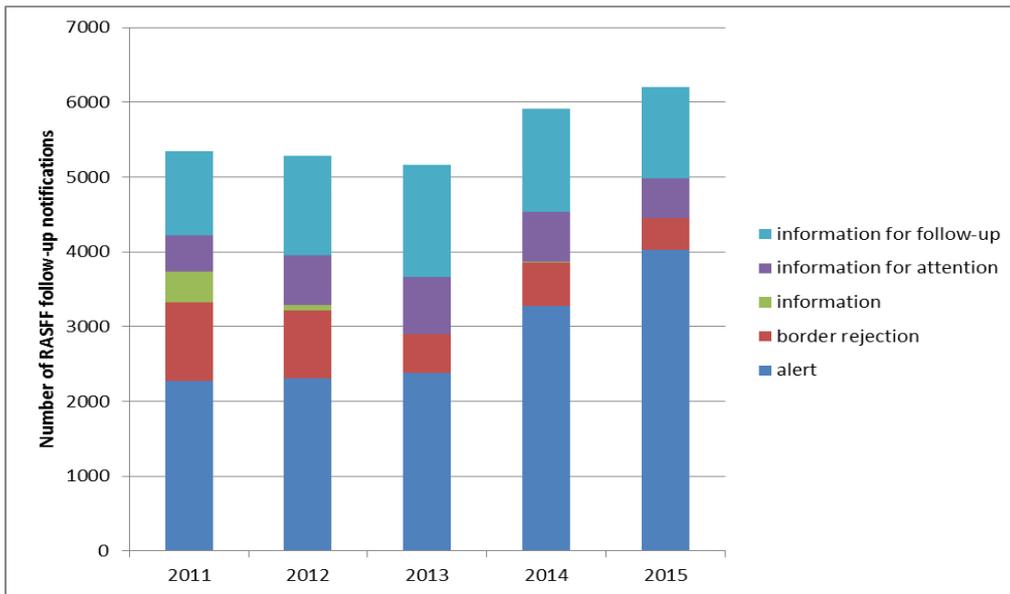
#### Original notifications

year	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up
2011	617	1820	720	551
2012	523	1712	679	507
2013	584	1438	679	429
2014	725	1357	605	402
2015	750	1380	476	378
% in/decrease	+3.4	+1.7	-21.3	-6.0



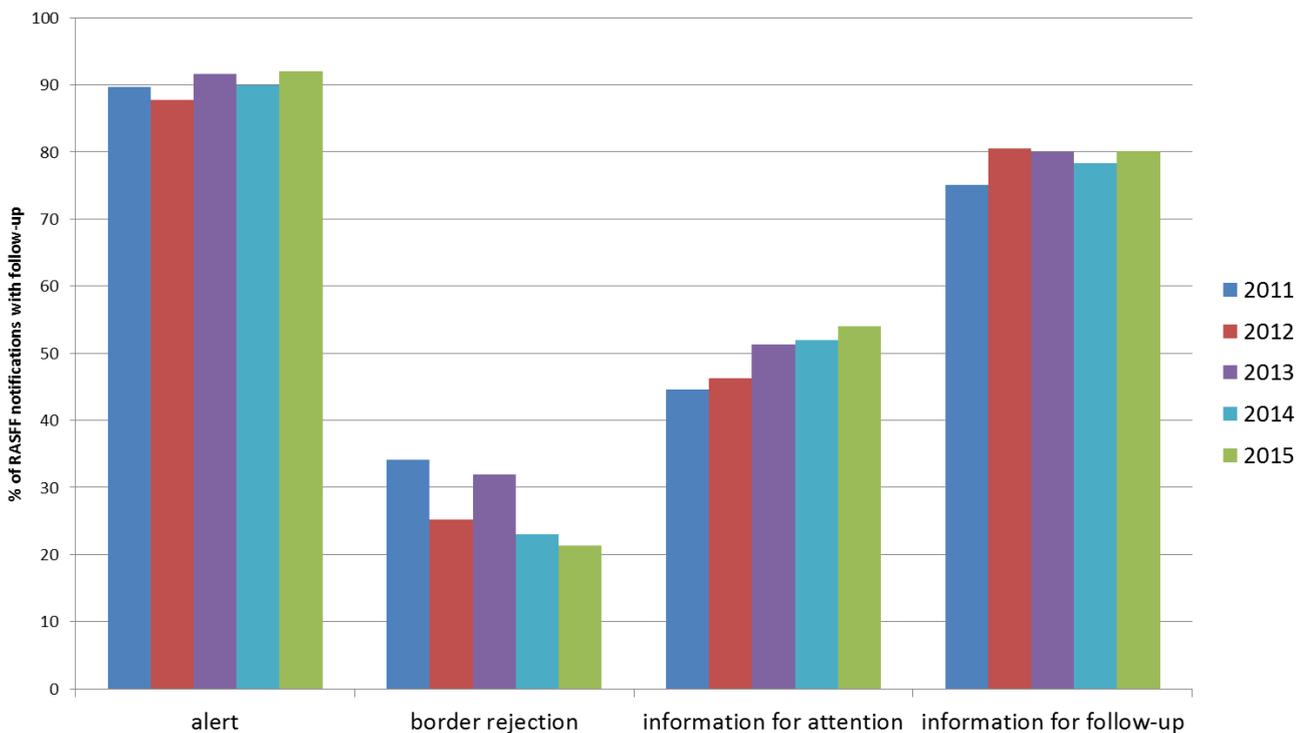
#### Follow-up notifications

year	alert	border rejection	information	information for attention	information for follow-up
2011	2265	1053	421	480	1126
2012	2312	906	74	664	1325
2013	2376	525	1	763	1493
2014	3280	581	2	670	1377
2015	4030	417	0	538	1219
% in/decrease	+22.9	-28.2	-100.0	-19.7	-11.5



### 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 2015, 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 2015 will end somewhat higher than shown here considering that follow-ups are still coming in to 2015 notifications.

## - by notifying country

### Original notifications

#### Evolution of original notifications by notifying country

country	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Austria</b>	62	87	110	89	65	49	46	46	57
<b>Belgium</b>	98	107	117	95	129	143	164	198	180
<b>Bulgaria</b>	10	22	26	34	116	75	54	87	99
<b>Commission Services</b>	8	6	23	12	4	1	1		
<b>Croatia</b>							8	11	20
<b>Cyprus</b>	52	65	53	52	77	48	44	55	39
<b>Czech Republic</b>	73	55	68	90	96	71	70	70	56
<b>Denmark</b>	130	127	122	131	151	130	112	99	94
<b>Estonia</b>	17	11	13	18	9	17	32	12	17
<b>Finland</b>	82	93	141	130	111	107	88	98	56
<b>France</b>	124	137	157	171	199	275	250	266	236
<b>Germany</b>	376	438	412	398	419	363	331	330	276
<b>Greece</b>	170	106	161	158	129	65	65	60	64
<b>Hungary</b>	29	17	10	20	13	10	3	15	9
<b>Iceland</b>	4	1	1	2	6	3	1	1	4
<b>Ireland</b>	24	27	30	35	49	54	40	42	58
<b>Italy</b>	501	470	467	543	549	518	528	504	512
<b>Latvia</b>	13	32	14	21	17	26	27	20	42
<b>Lithuania</b>	40	50	33	48	40	51	28	37	30
<b>Luxembourg</b>	10	11	16	23	25	8	17	12	13
<b>Malta</b>	38	30	18	12	27	11	12	8	13
<b>Netherlands</b>	156	247	212	215	204	173	264	252	259
<b>Norway</b>	68	50	30	23	51	62	45	44	32
<b>Poland</b>	123	156	141	140	226	180	120	132	91
<b>Portugal</b>	25	14	8	18	22	29	40	38	30
<b>Romania</b>	7	13	18	25	21	14	14	17	23
<b>Slovakia</b>	61	56	52	56	35	35	35	38	34
<b>Slovenia</b>	47	76	73	56	45	43	34	30	39
<b>Spain</b>	169	142	255	285	302	240	201	189	174
<b>Sweden</b>	55	50	60	74	72	96	91	67	74
<b>Switzerland</b>			4	7	6	20	41	34	24
<b>United Kingdom</b>	361	348	335	320	512	521	327	281	337

## Follow-up notifications

### Evolution of follow-up notifications by notifying country

country	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	% change
<b>Austria</b>	60	52	197	71	118	79	80	117	188	61
<b>Belgium</b>	94	135	178	117	158	210	240	297	262	-12
<b>Bulgaria</b>	28	28	44	57	56	60	106	147	143	-3
<b>Commission Services</b>	158	177	196	307	346	340	421	424	426	0
<b>Croatia</b>		3	1	3		2	15	31	31	0
<b>Cyprus</b>	59	72	57	68	47	76	73	62	78	26
<b>Czech Republic</b>	175	105	194	185	199	163	210	232	190	-18
<b>Denmark</b>	122	110	118	95	160	131	179	207	198	-4
<b>Estonia</b>	5	7	4	17	24	23	46	60	65	8
<b>European Food Safety Authority</b>								2		-100
<b>Finland</b>	17	13	25	23	19	23	64	97	94	-3
<b>France</b>	364	272	256	556	361	283	242	325	359	10
<b>Germany</b>	337	423	489	452	519	409	376	512	483	-6
<b>Greece</b>	80	60	132	113	118	98	66	74	91	23
<b>Hungary</b>	67	51	95	85	103	120	91	143	90	-37
<b>Iceland</b>	2	2	1	1	5			4	6	50
<b>Ireland</b>	36	46	27	43	60	72	154	130	115	-12
<b>Italy</b>	341	321	413	520	654	486	439	433	587	36
<b>Latvia</b>	32	16	30	32	40	36	43	68	58	-15
<b>Liechtenstein</b>	1						3		1	
<b>Lithuania</b>	17	21	26	51	55	72	69	70	59	-16
<b>Luxembourg</b>	16	33	11	15	16	8	30	37	37	0
<b>Malta</b>	33	33	44	43	24	32	43	42	77	83
<b>Netherlands</b>	152	180	149	155	135	180	222	265	364	37
<b>Norway</b>	27	22	41	44	49	58	44	58	67	16
<b>Poland</b>	118	137	154	154	202	313	415	420	343	-18
<b>Portugal</b>	51	31	28	42	25	74	85	109	138	27
<b>Romania</b>	19	27	40	48	63	85	76	137	127	-7
<b>Slovakia</b>	59	49	44	68	69	76	59	70	74	6
<b>Slovenia</b>	44	35	93	42	47	86	44	68	76	12
<b>Spain</b>	1259	911	999	1288	1077	1058	706	719	648	-10
<b>Sweden</b>	38	54	60	83	84	95	161	155	200	29
<b>Switzerland</b>	42	49	51	70	62	87	85	105	138	31
<b>United Kingdom</b>	121	118	168	125	152	182	141	109	219	101

## **2015 notifications by hazard category and by classification**

hazard category	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up	total
<b>adulteration / fraud</b>	1	89	3	6	99
<b>allergens</b>	114	3	18	2	137
<b>biocontaminants</b>	23	2	18	1	44
<b>biotoxins (other)</b>	12		5	1	18
<b>chemical contamination (other)</b>	2		2	4	8
<b>composition</b>	51	19	22	26	118
<b>food additives and flavourings</b>	17	55	32	36	140
<b>foreign bodies</b>	43	23	14	30	110
<b>GMO / novel food</b>	4	18	3	20	45
<b>heavy metals</b>	73	73	57	16	219
<b>industrial contaminants</b>	21	3	14	15	53
<b>labelling absent/incomplete/incorrect</b>	6	8	3	9	26
<b>migration</b>	14	38	12	13	77
<b>mycotoxins</b>	74	388	29	4	495
<b>non-pathogenic micro-organisms</b>	2	24	7	32	65
<b>not determined / other</b>	5	5	1		11
<b>organoleptic aspects</b>		25	3	10	38
<b>packaging defective / incorrect</b>	5	6		6	17
<b>parasitic infestation</b>		1	3	7	11
<b>pathogenic micro-organisms</b>	261	265	136	83	745
<b>pesticide residues</b>	24	292	71	18	405
<b>poor or insufficient controls</b>	2	70	7	9	88
<b>radiation</b>		7	6	13	26
<b>residues of veterinary medicinal products</b>	10	14	23	13	60
<b>TSEs</b>			2	19	21
<b>adulteration / fraud</b>	1	89	3	6	99

## 2015 notifications by product category and by classification

product category	alert	border rejection	information for attention	information for follow-up	total
alcoholic beverages	4	1	1	6	12
bivalve molluscs and products thereof	23	7	28	3	61
cephalopods and products thereof	1	15	2		18
cereals and bakery products	65	28	9	20	122
cocoa and cocoa preparations, coffee and tea	12	32	7	7	58
compound feeds	1		2	18	21
confectionery	12	10	4	7	33
crustaceans and products thereof	5	26	19	9	59
dietetic foods, food supplements, fortified foods	46	22	16	38	122
eggs and egg products	7	3	2	2	14
fats and oils	5	6	6	6	23
feed additives		1		1	2
feed materials	12	55	13	71	151
feed premixtures				2	2
fish and fish products	104	67	88	38	297
food additives and flavourings	1			6	7
food contact materials	24	83	23	22	152
fruits and vegetables	81	424	104	25	634
gastropods				3	3
herbs and spices	40	74	30	6	150
honey and royal jelly	1		4	2	7
ices and desserts	3			2	5
meat and meat products (other than poultry)	83	24	33	19	159
milk and milk products	48		2	9	59
non-alcoholic beverages	7	10		9	26
nuts, nut products and seeds	46	403	19	9	477
other food product / mixed	11	16	2	5	34
pet food	6	6	11	7	30
poultry meat and poultry meat products	62	59	43	12	176
prepared dishes and snacks	17	5	3	5	30
soups, broths, sauces and condiments	20	3	3	9	35
wine	3		2		5

## 2015 - top 10 number of notifications

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

### - by origin

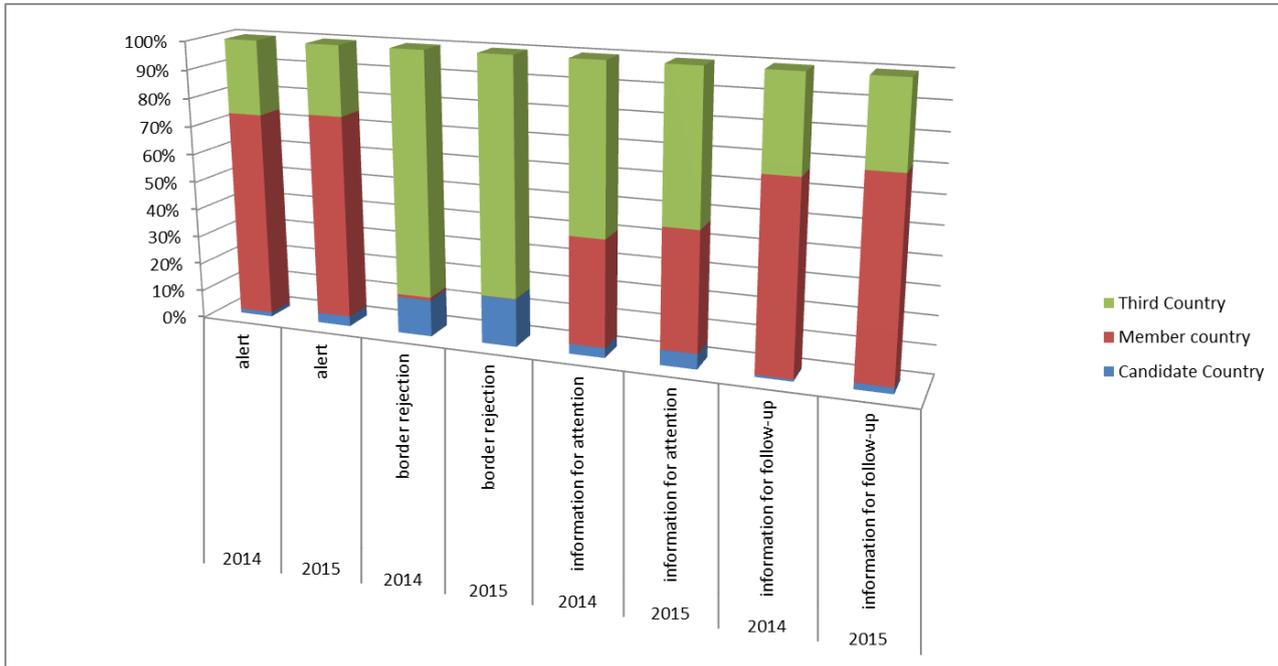
hazard	product category	origin	notifications
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	China	97
<i>Salmonella</i>	fruits and vegetables	India	78
<i>Salmonella</i>	nuts, nut products and seeds	India	65
mercury	fish and fish products	Spain	58
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Iran	55
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Turkey	53
aflatoxins	fruits and vegetables	Turkey	48
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	United States	37
<i>Salmonella</i>	poultry meat and poultry meat products	Brazil	37
migration of chromium	food contact materials	China	33

### - by notifying country

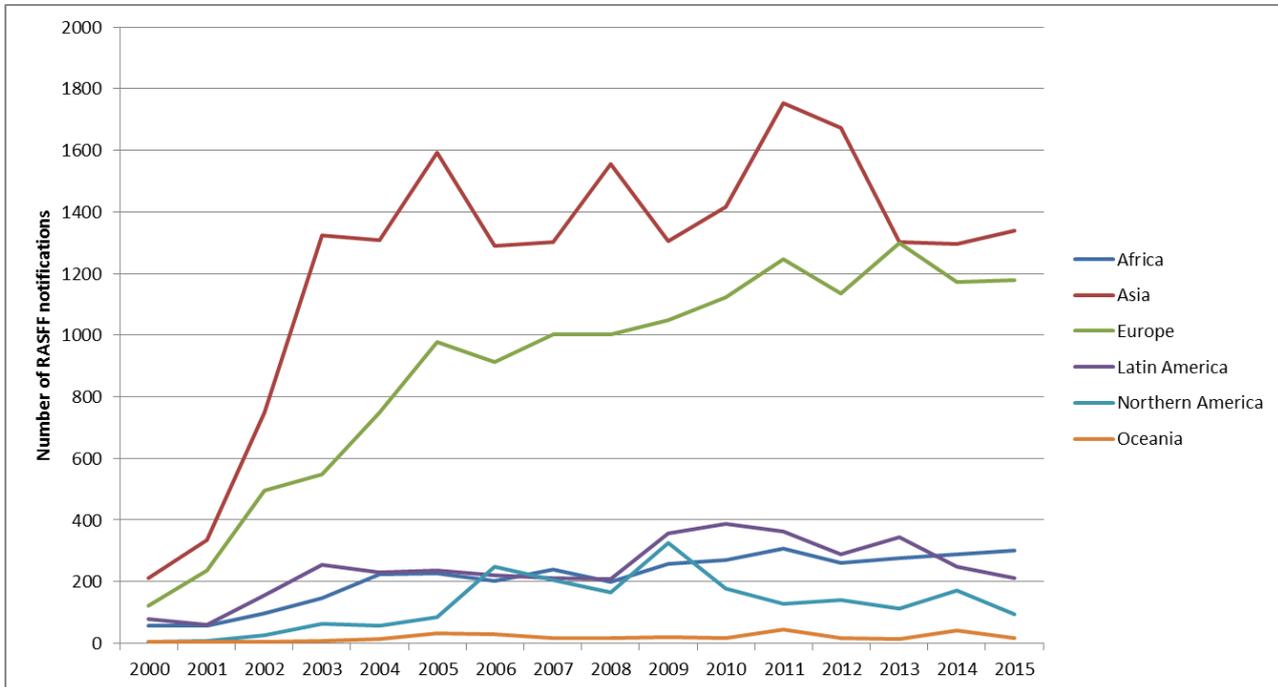
hazard	product category	notifying country	notifications
<i>Salmonella</i>	fruits and vegetables	United Kingdom	81
mercury	fish and fish products	Italy	66
<i>Salmonella</i>	poultry meat and poultry meat products	Netherlands	58
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Netherlands	41
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Germany	39
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Italy	39
migration of chromium	food contact materials	Italy	36
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Belgium	36
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	Spain	30
aflatoxins	nuts, nut products and seeds	United Kingdom	26

## Notifications – country of origin

### 2014-2015 Notifications by country type (origin)



### 2000-2015 notifications by world region



### **2013-2015 notifications by country of origin**



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.

### ***2013-2015 notifications by product category***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.

### ***2015 notifications by week and by type***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.

### ***2012-2015 Notifications by hazard category***



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Worksheet

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### ***2015 notifications by hazard category and notifying country***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.  
The coloured cells indicate the country with the highest number of notifications for a given hazard category.

### ***2015 notifications by product category and notifying country***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.  
The coloured cells indicate the country with the highest number of notifications for a given product category.

### ***2015 notifications by product category and type of control***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.

### ***2015 non-member countries having provided follow-up***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

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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.

### ***2015 notifications by hazard category and risk decision***



Microsoft Excel  
Worksheet

The Excel worksheet document can be opened from the file attachments of this PDF document.

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.