

“The Rapid Alert System for Food & Feed”

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The Ministry of Industry

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A. Overview of the RASFF

Concept

RASFF (Rapid Alert for Food and Feed) is a system established as a network, aimed to protect the health of consumers, by guaranteeing that the food, food contact material **FCM** and feed on the market are safe.

It is an effective tool for rapid transmission of information about risks detected in relation to food or feed or **FCM** and measures taken responding to serious risks, between the European Union **EU** Member States and the European Commission, and also with Third Countries.



The legal basis for this system is:

- ✓ **Regulation (EC) 178/2002** of the European parliament and of the council of 28 January 2002, laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety;
- ✓ **Commission Regulation (EU) No 16/2011** of 10 January 2011 laying down implementing measures for the Rapid alert system for food and feed.

History

Since its creation in 1979, **RASFF** has clearly demonstrated over the years, that it plays a key role in ensuring a high level of food safety for Europe´s citizens.

Members

The system is made up of contact points in all **RASFF** members:

- ✓ The European Commission;
- ✓ The Member States Competent Authorities;
- ✓ The European Food Safety Authority (**EFSA**);
- ✓ Competent Authorities of the European Economic Area (**EEA**): Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein;
- ✓ Switzerland.

These contact points exchange information about unsafe food, **FCM** and feed.

B. How does RASFF share information?

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 **FCM** 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.

The European Commission ensures:

- ✓ Collection and dissemination of notifications to the **RASFF** Members and to the concerned non – **EU** countries;
- ✓ the optimal functioning of the system by providing communications platforms, animating working groups and exploiting the data collected by the network;
- ✓ Archiving of notifications in databases;
- ✓ Up-to-date communications tools (**iRASFF**, **RASFF WINDOW**, **RASFF PORTAL**);
- ✓ Definition of legislation policies regarding the **RASFF**, together with the Member states;
- ✓ Development of Standard Operational Procedures **SOPs**;
- ✓ Daily and weekly overviews publications of notifications and annual reports, to analyse notable incidents and trends in hazards and risks;

- ✓ Reporting to third countries if a product subject to a notification has been exported to that country or when a product originating from that country has been the subject of a notification.

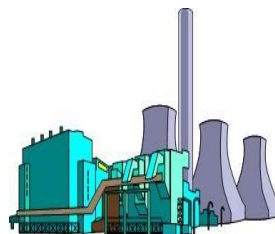
Member States

The Member States shall immediately notify the Commission under the **RASFF** system of:

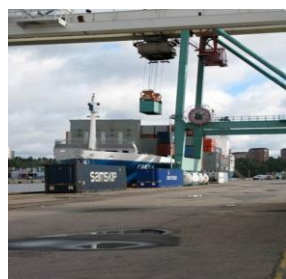
- ✓ Any measure such as withdrawing or recalling food or **FCM** or feed from the market, in order to protect consumers health;



- ✓ Agreement with professional operators that a food or **FCM** or feed should not be placed on the market or can be placed on the market under specific conditions;



- ✓ All rejections of food or **FCM** or feed at a border post of the European Union on account of a health risk;



National Contact Point

- ✓ National Contact point **NCP** and European Commission contact point **ECCP**: Member States need to designate one **NCP** and communicate that designation to the **ECCP**, as well as detailed information regarding the persons operating it and their contact;
- ✓ Members of the network shall ensure effective communication for the purposes of the network.

C. RASFF notifications

1. Alert notifications

An alert notification or alert is sent when food, feed or **FCM** presenting a serious risk is available on the market and when rapid action is 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.



2. Information notifications

An “information notification” is used in the same situation, but when the other members do not have to take rapid action because the product is not on the market or the risk is not considered to be serious.



3. Information notifications for follow-up

An information notification for follow-up is related to a product that is or may be placed on the market in another member country.

4. Information notifications for attention

An information notification for attention is related to a product that:

- ✓ Is present only in the notifying member country; or
- ✓ Has not been placed on the market; or
- ✓ Is no longer on the market.

5. Border rejection notifications

A “border rejection notification” concerns a consignment of food, feed, or **FCM** that was refused entry into the community for a reason of a risk to a human health and also to animal health or to the environment if it concerns feed.



6. 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 are 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.

7. RASFF news

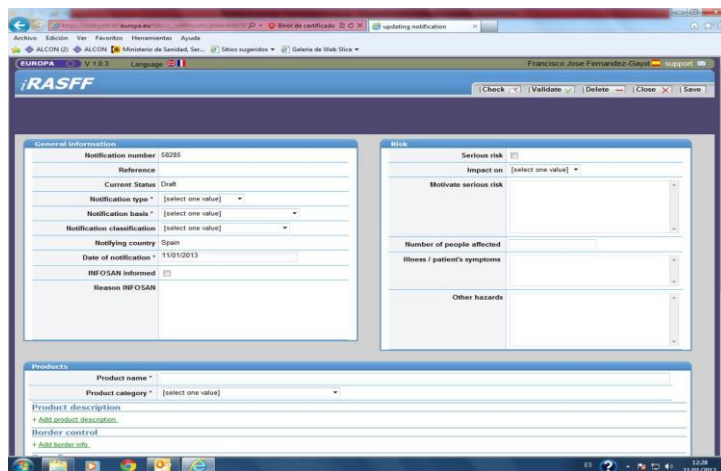
Any information related to the safety of food or **FCM** or feed which has not been communicated as an alert or an information notification, but which is judged valuable for the control authorities, is transmitted to the members under the heading News.



D. Communication tools and archive of RASFF information

The European Commission maintains various **IT** systems and databases that support directly or not the operation of the **RASFF**. The databases (either public or not) allow the users to search in the history of notifications and to extract useful information.

- ✓ **RASFF WINDOW** (restricted)
- ✓ **RASFF PORTAL**
- ✓ **iRASFF** (restricted)
- ✓ Trade Control and Expert System **TRACES** (restricted)



1. RASFF window

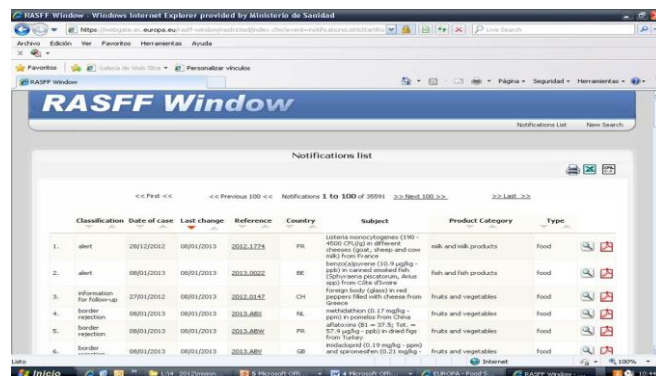
- It is a web based database protected by secured logins and passwords for hosting and archiving the **RASFF** notifications;
- It is updated daily;

- It gives **non-RASFF** member countries limited access to the database of notifications;
- The specific login given for each **non-RASFF** member country only allows officials from that country to see the **RASFF** notifications relevant to their country.

2. RASFF portal

- In order to ensure transparency and facilitate access to stakeholders of the information, the Commission has developed this web based database;
- It is available on the public **EU** site and comprehensive information is published for every notification;
- The available information in **RASFF** Portal is limited, confined to the date, product, hazard, the countries involved, distribution, and the actions taken.

<http://webgate.ec.europa.eu/rasff-window/portal/>



The screenshot shows the RASFF Window portal interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'RASFF Window' and 'Notifications List'. Below this is a 'Notifications List' section with a table of notifications. The table has columns for Classification, Date of case, Last change, Reference, Country, Subject, Product Category, and Type. The first row shows an alert for Listeria monocytogenes (E19) in milk and milk products from France. The second row shows an alert for benzocaine (E19) in fish and fish products from Germany. The third row shows information for fresh frozen grapes in retail packages from Greece. The fourth row shows a border rejection for aflatoxin (E1) in fruits and vegetables from China. The fifth row shows a border rejection for aflatoxin (E1) in fruits and vegetables from France. The sixth row shows a border rejection for melatonin (E19) in fruits and vegetables from Greece.

Classification	Date of case	Last change	Reference	Country	Subject	Product Category	Type
1. alert	2012/2012	08/01/2013	2012.1775	FR	Listeria monocytogenes (E19) - 4500 CFU/g in different cheeses (goat, alpine and cow milk) from France	milk and milk products	Food
2. alert	08/01/2013	08/01/2013	2013.0002	DE	benzocaine (E19) 9 mg/kg - 100 mg/kg in canned smoked fish	fish and fish products	Food
3. information for follow-up	27/01/2012	08/01/2013	2012.0142	GR	fresh frozen grapes in retail packages filled with cheese from Greece	fruits and vegetables	Food
4. border rejection	08/01/2013	08/01/2013	2013.A60	NA	melatonin (E17 mg/kg - 0 mg) in cereals from China	fruits and vegetables	Food
5. border rejection	08/01/2013	08/01/2013	2013.A60V	FR	aflatoxin (E1 = 37 % fat = 37.2 mg/kg) milk in dessert	fruits and vegetables	Food
6. border rejection	08/01/2013	08/01/2013	2013.A60V	GR	melatonin (E17 mg/kg - 0 mg) and spermidine (E13 mg/kg)	fruits and vegetables	Food

3. iRASFF

- New online platform designed to be more interactive and easier to use;
- Allows online exchange of information replacing the sending of text templates by emails;
- Notification types:
 - ✓ **“Original Notification”**: a **RASFF** notification referring to one or more consignments of a food, feed or **FCM** that were not previously notified to the **RASFF**, classified as alert, information or border rejection notification;

- ✓ **“Follow-up Notification”**: which refers to the same consignments and which adds information to the original notification, such as information on hazards, product traceability or measures taken;
 - The information is stored in a structured way;
 - The collection of information makes up the original **RASFF** notification.
- The following elements form part of this **RASFF** notification:
- ✓ General information block;
 - ✓ Risk block;
 - ✓ Product block;
 - ✓ Additional information and attached documents blocks.

4. Traces system

- The **TRACES** system is a management tool for tracking the movement of animals and products of animal origin from both outside of the European Union and within its territory;
- It also deals with border controls for products of animal origin;
- The system is customised for certain types of controls and in the case of an unfavourable result, a **RASFF** notification is created.


E. Example of notifications received by the Ministry of Industry in 2017

سفارة لبنان في بروكسل
برقية رقم ١١٣٣ / تاريخ ١٥ - ٠٧ - ٢٠١٧

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
Directorate G: Crisis management in food, animals and plants
Unit DGSG.GS: Alert, traceability and Consequences

RASFF
Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed

Brussels, 14 February, 2017



**FOOD
VERY URGENT
ALERT NOTIFICATION: 2017.0194
ORIGINAL NOTIFICATION**

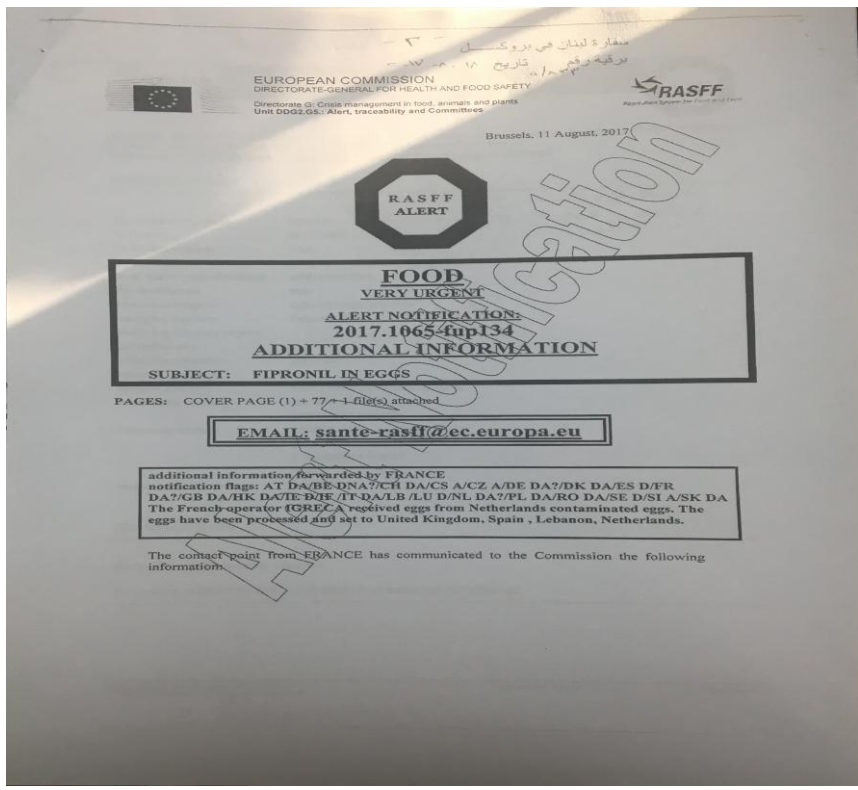
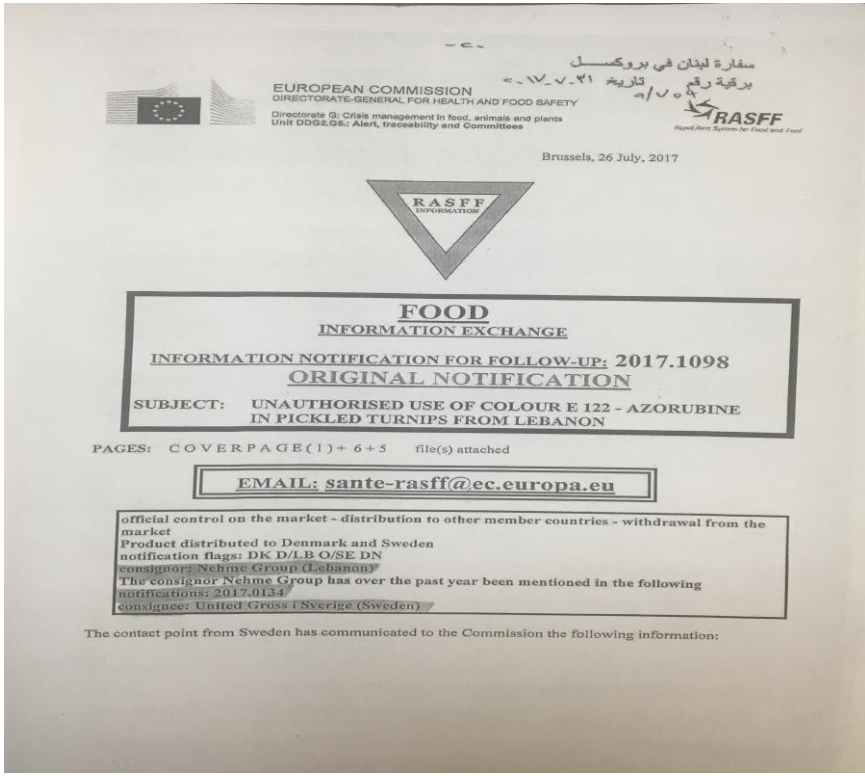
**SUBJECT: UNAUTHORISED COLOUR RHODAMINE B IN
PICKLED TERNIPS FROM LEBANON**

PAGES: COVER PAGE (1) + 7 (4 files) attached

EMAIL: sante-rasff@ec.europa.eu

official control on the market - distribution to other member countries - withdrawal from recipient(s)
Product distributed to Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland
notification flags: DE DN DK DE/PL G/NL D/PL D
importer: Egre-Orient GmbH (Germany)
The importer Egre-Orient GmbH has over the past year been mentioned in the following notifications: 2016.1224
wholesaler: Orientalischer Markt, Ali Waad Naif (Germany)
exporter: Orient Foods L.L.C. (Lebanon)
The exporter Orient Foods L.L.C. has over the past year been mentioned in the following notifications: 2016.1224
The contact point from Germany is kindly requested to provide the full details on the origin of the product

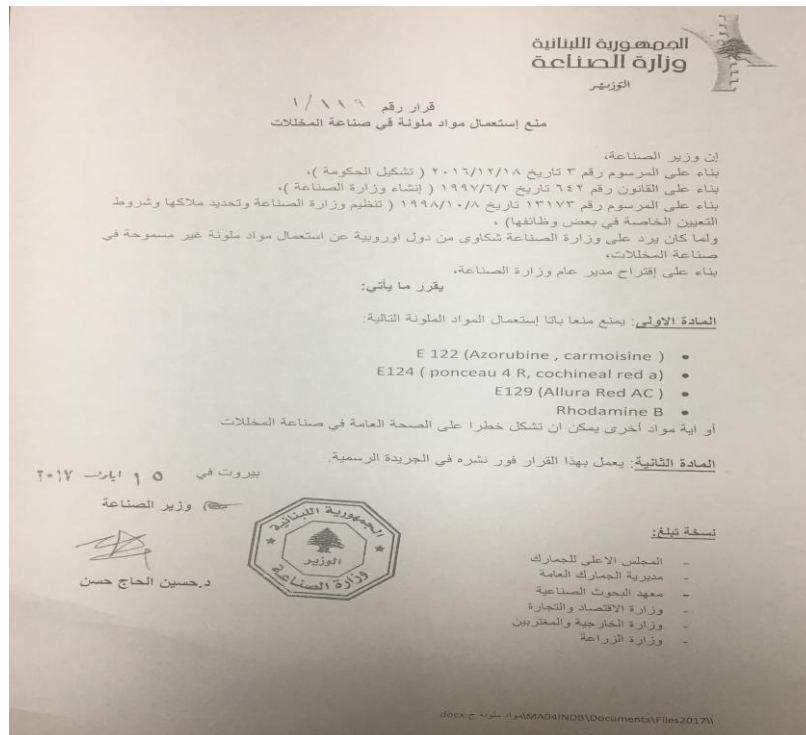
The contact point from Germany has communicated to the Commission the following information:



F. Measures taken by the Ministry of Industry regarding pickles notifications

- ✓ Decision of **H.E. Minister of Industry** No. 119/1 dated on 15/9/2017 which deals with banning the use of the following colorants in pickles:

- E122 Azorubine (Carmoisine);
- E124 Ponceau 4R (Cochineal red A);
- E129 Allura red AC;
- Rhodamine B.



- ✓ A warning to the syndicate of food industrialists about not using the above mentioned colorants, otherwise different types of measures will be taken by the Ministry of Industry, starting from refraining to endorse certificates of origin for pickles consignments not accompanied by a document ascertaining the solely use of allowed colorants, to the shutting down of the relevant industry.

G. The possibility of implementing the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) in Lebanon

Currently, there is no **RASFF** in Lebanon; the participation of Lebanon in this system is limited to the following:

- ✓ The Ministry of Economy and Trade receives detailed **RASSF** notifications from the European Commission.
- ✓ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants transmits the notifications received from the European Commission and relating to the existence of a serious direct or indirect risk to human health, deriving from food or **FCM** or Feed of Lebanese origin- to relevant ministries. Each ministry takes appropriate actions and measures within its legal powers; the European Commission is informed thereof.

With the enforcement of the expedited Food Safety Law no. 35 dated 24/11/2015, the Food Safety Lebanese Commission **FSLC**, pursuant to article 9 of this law, will be in charge of the establishment and management of a Rapid Alert System to control health and food risks and provide required information and communication among all parties concerned with these risks, on national, regional and international levels.

H. Benefits of RASFF to food safety in Lebanon

The main benefit of implementing **RASFF** in Lebanon, is to ensure through a network of communication among all ministries concerned in controlling food, food contact material **FCM** and feed, the protection of consumers health by guaranteeing that the food, **FCM** and feed are safe, which makes these products competitive domestically and globally. In this context, the exchanged data on food safety via the Food Safety Lebanese Commission is used to: withdraw, recall, trace unsafe products and take relevant corrective actions such as:

- ✓ Counterfeited products, for instance the case of horse meat in Ireland and the **UK** in 2013,
- ✓ Products with microbiological contamination, products that cause food-borne diseases, and food poisoning;

- ✓ Products containing prohibited substance and additives in food and feed, such as the antibiotic chloramphenicol in food supplements, and enzymes preparations of feed and shrimps imported from china;
- ✓ Products that contain pesticides residues, veterinary drugs, heavy metals, mycotoxins, and other contaminants that exceed the established tolerance limit.