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## PRESS RELEASE

### EFSA publishes EU-wide survey on *Salmonella* levels in broiler meat flocks

EFSA has published a survey on the levels of *Salmonella* detected in broiler flocks (chickens reared for meat) across the European Union in 2005-6. *Salmonella* was estimated to be present in almost 1 in 4 flocks (23.7%) according to the survey which was compiled by EFSA's Zoonoses Task Force<sup>1</sup> comprising expert representatives from EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland. Informed by these results, the European Commission will now set an EU-wide reduction target in broiler flocks for two of the *Salmonella* types (*Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium) that are responsible for most cases of *Salmonella* related food poisoning in humans. The Task Force is also recommending action at national level to reduce other types of *Salmonella* of importance to public health as well as consumer education campaigns and strict implementation of EU food hygiene legislation in mass catering to increase consumer protection.

Detection levels in flocks varied significantly between Member States with *Salmonella* being found in 0% to 68.2% of national flocks<sup>2</sup>. *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium which are the two most frequently reported *Salmonella* types<sup>3</sup> in human cases in the EU, were detected in approximately 40% of *Salmonella* positive flocks. Informed by the results of the EFSA survey, the European Commission will set an EU-wide reduction target<sup>4</sup> for these two types of *Salmonella* for a transitional three-year period.

Chicken meat from broilers is linked to many food poisoning cases of *Salmonella* in Europe. According to national figures provided in EFSA's 2005 zoonoses report<sup>5</sup>, 0 to 18% of fresh (raw) chicken meat samples were contaminated with *Salmonella*. *Salmonella* was the second most reported cause of food-borne diseases in humans in Europe with 176,395 people suffering from *Salmonella* infections in 2005<sup>6</sup> (approximately 38 people in every 100,000). *Salmonella* infections can range from a mild to severe gastroenteritis and in some vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly can be fatal. Affected people can also suffer long term effects, such as reactive arthritis. Risks for consumers are from under-cooking of chicken meat or cross-contamination to other foods. Thorough cooking and strict kitchen hygiene will prevent or reduce the risk posed by *Salmonella* contaminated meat.

<sup>1</sup> Task Force on Zoonoses Data Collection on the Analysis of the baseline survey on the prevalence of *Salmonella* in broiler flocks of *Gallus gallus*, in the EU, 2005-2006.

<sup>2</sup> Pages 14 and 16 of the study provide detailed information on estimated flock prevalence by Member State.

<sup>3</sup> *Salmonella* types are commonly classified by serovar which is a subdivision of a species or subspecies distinguishable from other strains.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission Decision 2005/636/EC of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?val=407462:cs&lang=en&list=407462:cs.398698:cs.&pos=1&page=1&nbl=2&pgs=10&hwords=>) will set temporary reduction targets for *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium.

<sup>5</sup> Page 33 of "EFSA's Second Community Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic Agents, Antimicrobial resistance and Foodborne outbreaks in the European Union in 2005":

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring\\_zoonoses/reports/zoonoses\\_report\\_2005.html](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring_zoonoses/reports/zoonoses_report_2005.html)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press\\_room/press\\_release/press\\_releases\\_2006/pr\\_zoonoses\\_report2005.html](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press_room/press_release/press_releases_2006/pr_zoonoses_report2005.html)

EFSA also published a survey last year on *Salmonella* levels in laying hen flocks (chickens raised for egg production) across the EU<sup>7</sup>.

In addition to the EU-wide *Salmonella* reduction target for *Salmonella* Enteritidis and *Salmonella* Typhimurium, the Task Force recommends that Member States also take action in their national control programmes on other *Salmonella* types of particular public health importance in their countries. According to the Task Force, consumer education campaigns about good hygiene practices in handling of chicken meat and strict implementation of food hygiene legislation in mass catering would also increase protection of consumers.

The full report and annexes are available on the EFSA website at:

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring\\_zoonoses/reports/zoon\\_report\\_finbroilers.html](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring_zoonoses/reports/zoon_report_finbroilers.html)

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<sup>7</sup> EFSA “Report of the Task Force on Zoonoses Data Collection on the Analysis of the baseline survey on the prevalence of *Salmonella* in holdings of laying hen flocks of *Gallus gallus*”:

[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring\\_zoonoses/reports/report\\_finlayinghens.html](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/monitoring_zoonoses/reports/report_finlayinghens.html)