

Germany upholds warning for vegetables

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A customer and a seller seen through the window of a street side market shop in Moscow, Russia, on Tuesday, May 31, 2011. A massive and unprecedented outbreak of bacterial infections linked to contaminated vegetables claimed two more lives in Europe on Tuesday. Russia's chief sanitary agency on Monday banned the imports of cucumbers, tomatoes and fresh salad from Spain and Germany pending further notice. (AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko Jr)

(AP) -- Researchers still have not been able to pinpoint the cause for a deadly foodborne bacterial outbreak that has hit Germany and other European nations, Germany's agriculture minister said Wednesday.

Ilse Aigner told German ARD Television that scientists are working nonstop to try to find out what produce has caused the contamination with an unusual strain of the common E. coli [germ](#) that has left 16 dead and 1,500 infected in Europe.

The [outbreak](#) is unlike anything Western experts have seen, with nearly

400 of the infected suffering severe and potentially fatal symptoms. Several days into the [health threat](#), scientists remain unsure what produce - and what country - is responsible.

In Germany, where most of the victims have been, officials say that investigations, including interviews with patients, have shown that people were likely infected by eating raw cucumbers, tomatoes or lettuce.

Aigner told consumers to continue avoiding those vegetables, and Russia has gone so far as to ban imports of those vegetables from Spain or Germany.

Investigators across Europe are frantically trying to determine the scope of the contamination by an unusual strain of the common E. coli germ - and where in the long journey from farm to grocery store the contamination occurred.

German authorities pointed to a few cucumbers from Spain, but further tests showed that those vegetables, while contaminated, did not cause the outbreak.

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