

Hong Kong, Switzerland, 15 EU states hit by egg scandal: EU

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Insecticide-tainted eggs from European poultry farms have now been found in Hong Kong and Switzerland as well as 15 EU countries, the European Commission said Friday.

The European Commission said all had received eggs contaminated with the pesticide fipronil, adding that a meeting of EU ministers to discuss the scandal had been provisionally scheduled for September 26.

"We would like this meeting to happen with some distance to the events and have as many facts established as possible," European Commission spokeswoman Mina Andreeva told a press conference.

"This is not, let's be clear, a crisis meeting," Andreeva said.

The EU countries affected are Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Sweden, Britain, Austria, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Denmark, along with non-EU Switzerland, and Hong Kong, commission spokesman Daniel Rosario said.

Farms had been shut down in four countries—Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and France—where authorities have confirmed the illegal use of the substance to treat poultry farms, Rosario said.

The other countries—plus non-EU Switzerland and Hong Kong—received exports from the four countries.

Millions of eggs and egg-based products have been pulled from European supermarket shelves since the scare went public on August 1 and there are growing questions about who knew what, and when.

Fipronil is commonly used to get rid of fleas, lice and ticks from animals but is banned by the European Union from use in the food industry.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says that when eaten in large quantities it can harm people's kidneys, liver and thyroid glands.

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