

Tainted-eggs scandal reaches Italy

August 21 2017

Italy said Monday it has found traces of fipronil in two eggs samples, making it the latest country hit by the Europe-wide insecticide scandal, while a batch of tainted frozen omelettes was also withdrawn.

The two positive samples were from a total of 114 samples so far tested. One involved Italian-sourced eggs, while the other was still under investigation, said the Italian health ministry.

Separately, a regional official said a batch of frozen omelettes containing traces of fipronil had been withdrawn from sale in Milan.

The omelettes were supplied by German group Kagerr and distributed by an Italian group, a Lombardy regional official told reporters.

He said 127 units from the batch had been withdrawn, but 117 had already been sold to consumers.

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

The insecticide has now been discovered in eggs in 17 European countries since the scandal came to light at the start of August, and was even found as far away as Hong Kong.

Millions of eggs have been pulled from supermarket shelves and dozens of poultry farms closed, and the European Commission is to hold a crisis meeting in September.

Belgium became the first country to officially notify the EU's food safety alert system of the presence of tainted eggs on July 20, followed by the Netherlands and Germany.

Italy's agricultural association, Coldiretti, called on the government to publish a list of the at-risk products in order to prevent mass panic over eggs.

The association said Italians eat on average 215 eggs per person every year, and got a large part of them—about 610,000 kilogrammes' worth (1.34 million pounds) between January and May—from the Netherlands.

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Citation: Tainted-eggs scandal reaches Italy (2017, August 21) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-08-tainted-eggs-scandal-italy.html>

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