



Overview on the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF)

SPICED Symposium, 1-2 June 2016, BfR

Dear colleagues,

- First I want to thank you for the invitation and for giving me the opportunity to present you an overview on the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
- My name is David Trigo. I am scientific officer at the National Contact Point of the RASFF in Germany ,the Federal Office for Consumer protection and food safety (BVL).
- In the next 15 minutes I´ll try to give you an short overview on the RASFF, It´s aims, the members of the network, the communication channels and last but not least a view statistics with a short focus on spices.

Objectives of the system

The Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) allows the European Commission, EU Member States and other associated countries to **share information** and **take immediate action** when **dangerous food or feed is detected** on the market or at the border of the EU

First of all, what are the objectives of the system RASFF?

Already established in 1979 the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed was introduced to share information between the member states of the EU in cases where dangerous food or feed is detected on the market or at the borders..This information shall enable the competent authorities to take appropriate measures and rapid action in order to protect the consumer.

Members of the Network

Contact point in each Member State

Austria	Greece	Portugal	Iceland
Belgium	Hungary	Romania	Norway
Bulgaria	Ireland	Slovakia	Liechtenstein
Cyprus	Italy	Slovenia	
Czech Republic	Latvia	Spain	
Denmark	Lithuania	Sweden	
Estonia	Luxembourg	United Kingdom	
Finland	Malta	(Croatia)	
France	Netherlands		
Germany	Poland		



European Commission



European Food Safety Authority



EFTA Surveillance Authority



Switzerland

More than 60
third countries
directly linked
to RASFF

The members of the network are the 28 member states of the European Union

The EU COMMISSION itself,

the EFSA,

the EFTA Surveillance Authority (European Free Trade Association) Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway,

And Switzerland

In addition there are around 60 third countries worldwide directly connected to the system and have restricted access to the databank RASFF WINDOW.

These countries receive relevant information in cases where their products are concerned by a notification or distribution took place into their country. Additionally they are able to respond to rapid alerts (for example to transmit their outcome of investigations), too.

At this point I have to mention that the RASFF gives only access to the competent authorities in the member states. Consequently the information

transmitted are strictly confidential and shall not be given to third parties.

EU

- Article 50 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002
- Article 29 of Regulation (EC) No 183/2005 (+ pet feed)
- Article 19 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 (border rejection)
- Regulation (EU) No 16/2011 (Implementing measures)
- [RASFF SOP`s (Standard operating pocedures) – **no legal status**]

National

- General administrative regulation on the RASFF (AVV SWS)
 - Definitions
 - Authorities / Responsibilities
 - Notification procedures
 - Notification criteria

The legal bases for the system are on european level the reg (ec) no 178/2002 in particular Art. 50 (rapid alert system) and concerning feed Art. 29 of Reg. No 183/2005. In reg 882/2004 we can find the basis for RASFF border rejection notifications.

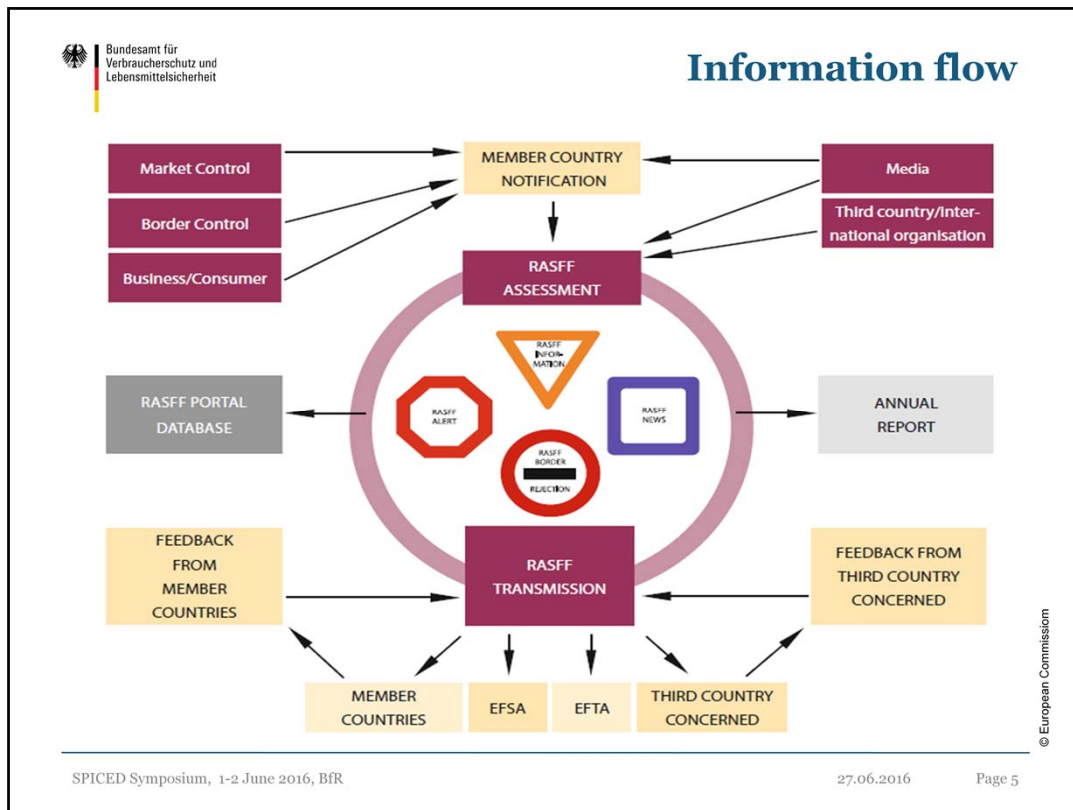
Since 2011 we have got reg. (eu) 16/2011 with implementing measures which gives definitions, precises the role of the Commission, defines the duties of the members, and the way how to exchange information with third countries and how the general public shall be informed of risks to human health on basis of art. 10 of reg 178/2002.

In addition the Commission published on their website the SOP`s for the RASFF which had been written by the memebtrs of the network. They complement the before mentioned RASFF regulations and give guidance and best practice for the operation of the system. I have to underline that this document is of course not legally binding!

As we have got a federal system in Germany it is necessary to „transfer“ the eu regulations to this governmental form.

Because of this we have got the general administrative regulation on the RASFF which is legally binding for the competent authorities only . It gives definitions. determines the responsibilities of the competent authorities of

the Länder and of the federal level.



The next slide gives you an overview on the communication channels respectively of the information flow in the RASFF.

In most cases the notifications are based whether on official controls on the market, on company own checks or on border controls. In some cases the notification can also be based on media monitoring or on information provided by third countries or international organisations like the World Health Organisation for example via INFOSAN (International Food Safety Authorities Network).

In Germany the competent authorities of the Länder create the notification, transmit it to the national contact point, which transfers it to the European Commission. The European Commission validates the notification and transmits it to the member states/third countries concerned. Possible feedback (so-called follow-up) to notifications is transmitted the same way. Additionally, the Commission enters all notifications into a database (RASFF Portal) and once a year publishes an annual report on the RASFF.

Classification of notification

Alert

Food, feed or food contact material which is on the market presenting a serious risk and requiring rapid action in another country.



Information

Food, feed or food contact material presenting a risk but not requiring rapid action in another country

- **for follow-up** (because the risk is not considered serious)
- **for attention** (because the product is not on the market at the time of notification)



Border Rejection

Consignment of food, feed or food contact material that was refused entry into the European Union for reason of a risk to human health and also to animal health or to the environment if it concerns feed.



In the RASFF there are three main categories of notifications.

First the Alert notifications which concern food/feed which is on the market presenting a serious risk and requires rapid action in a member country.

Secondly the Information notification which can be divided into two sub categories. Into information for follow up and information for attention

Thirdly the border rejection notification where food/feed was refused entry in the European union, because of risk to human health and so on.

Content of RASFF notifications

Content of Notifications

- **Type of hazard**
- **Product description**
- **Concerned batches** (lot number, BBD, origin of the product etc.)
- **Risk, legal bases, legal limits**
- **Measures taken**
(Withdrawal from market, Recall etc.)
- **Distribution** (EU, Third Countries)

Documents

- **Notification form**
- **Analytical report**
- **Picture(s)**
- **Delivery document(s)**
- **Distribution list(s)**
- **Invoice(s)**
- **Recall, Letter of withdrawal, press release**
- **Other documents**
(Health certificate, CVED/CED, etc.)

To be useful for the competent authorities in the affected countries some basic informations should be available:

Consequently several informations are obligatory like

1. Type of hazard (including risk analysis conc. if it is serious or not)
2. Product description like name of the prod., lot number, BBD
3. the measures taken whether by the business operator or the competent authority – which simplifies the enforcement of measures in the affected countries by the competent authorities
4. Distribution lists to facilitate the tracing of the goods

The notification form should also be accompanied by further documents like reports, pictures, withdrawal or recall letters, CVED etc.. Which facilitate the identification of the concerned goods on site.

The screenshot displays the i(nteractive)RASFF application interface. At the top left is the logo of the Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit. The main header features the 'RASFF' logo and the text 'i(nteractive)RASFF'. The interface is divided into several sections:

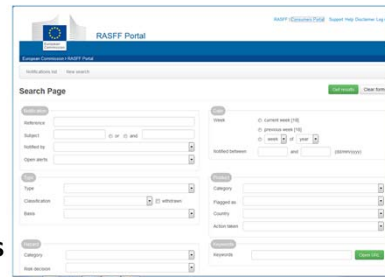
- General information:** Contains fields for Notification number (306892), Reference, Lock edition (checkbox), Current Status (Draft), Notification type (dropdown), Notification basis (dropdown), Notification classification (dropdown), Notifying country (Germany), Date of notification (01/06/2016), INFOSAN (to be) informed (checkbox), and Reason INFOSAN.
- Risk:** Contains fields for Serious risk (dropdown), Impact on (dropdown), Motivate serious risk (text area), Number of persons affected, Type of illness/symptoms, and Hazards observed.
- Products:** Contains fields for Product (text), Product category (dropdown), Product description, Border control, Sampling, and Product traceability.

At the bottom of the interface, there is a footer with the text 'SPICED Symposium, 1-2 June 2016, BfR' on the left, '27.06.2016' in the center, and 'Page 8' on the right.

Just to give you an impression of the RASFF application resp. form I made a screen shot of the used online application interactive RASFF which shows you the user friendly combination of dropdown menus, free text parts and autofill functions which simplify the creation of a notification.

RASFF Portal - public information

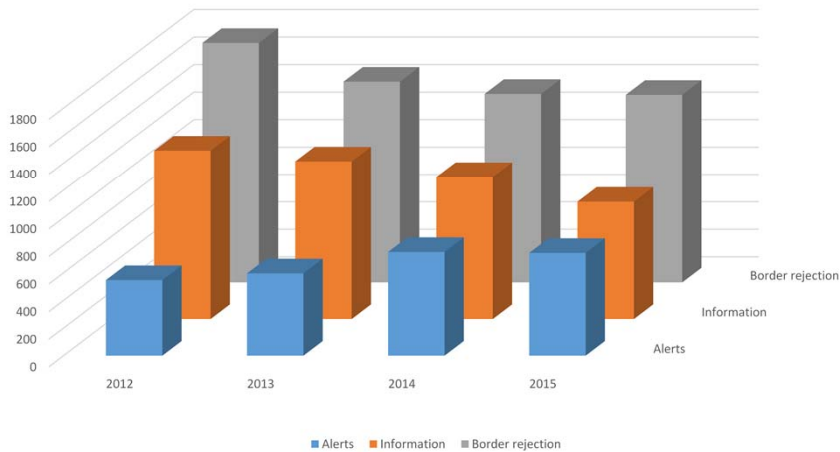
- **Accordance with Art. 10 of Reg (EC) No 178/2002 (keyword „transparency“)**
- **Database with original notifications**
- **RASFF Portal for consumers – notifications anonymised**
- **RASFF Portal for authorized users (members of the network) – password protected**
- **search mask: products, classification, hazards, origin etc.**
- **Export to Excel, XML and Print version**



At the beginning I already mentioned that the content of the notifications are confidential and the details like names of the food business operators, productnames etc are only visible for the competent authorities. Nevertheless, based on article 10 of reg. 178/2002, the general public should be appropriate informed of the nature of the risk to health.

For this purpose the commission gives access to the RASFF via the data base RASFF Portal to the public. This web access allows the user to search for notifications via a search mask, where you can enter concrete notification numbers, products, product categories etc. En plus you can export the result of your search to several data formats like Excel, XML in order to e. g. analyse them.

Number of notifications 2012 – 2015

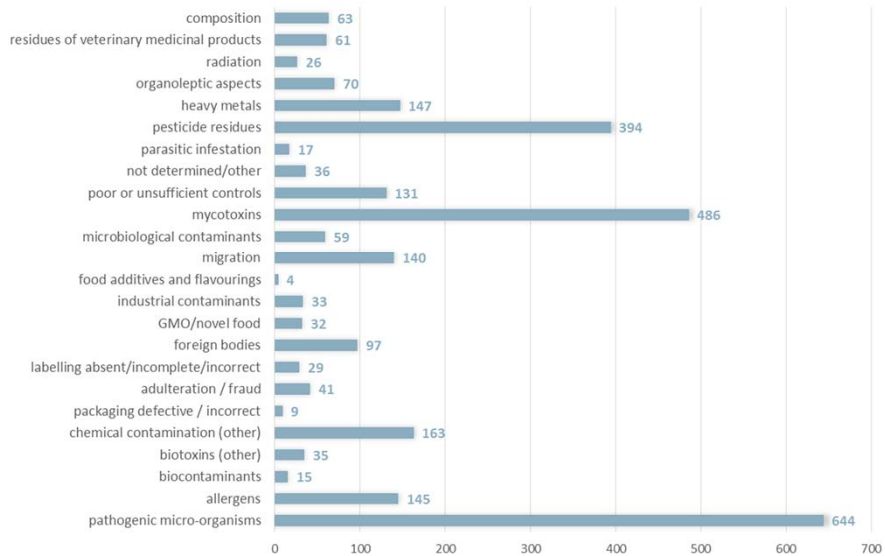


To give you an impression of how many notifications are transmitted in the RASFF I created this chart by using the data of the RASFF Portal. It shows you the development in the number of notification from 2012 to 2015.

In 2015 3049 original notifications (775 Alerts, 887 Informations and 1387 border rejections) were created

In general we can say that approximately round about 8000 notification (original notifications plus the follow up notifications) are transmitted per year via the system.

Overview hazards 2015

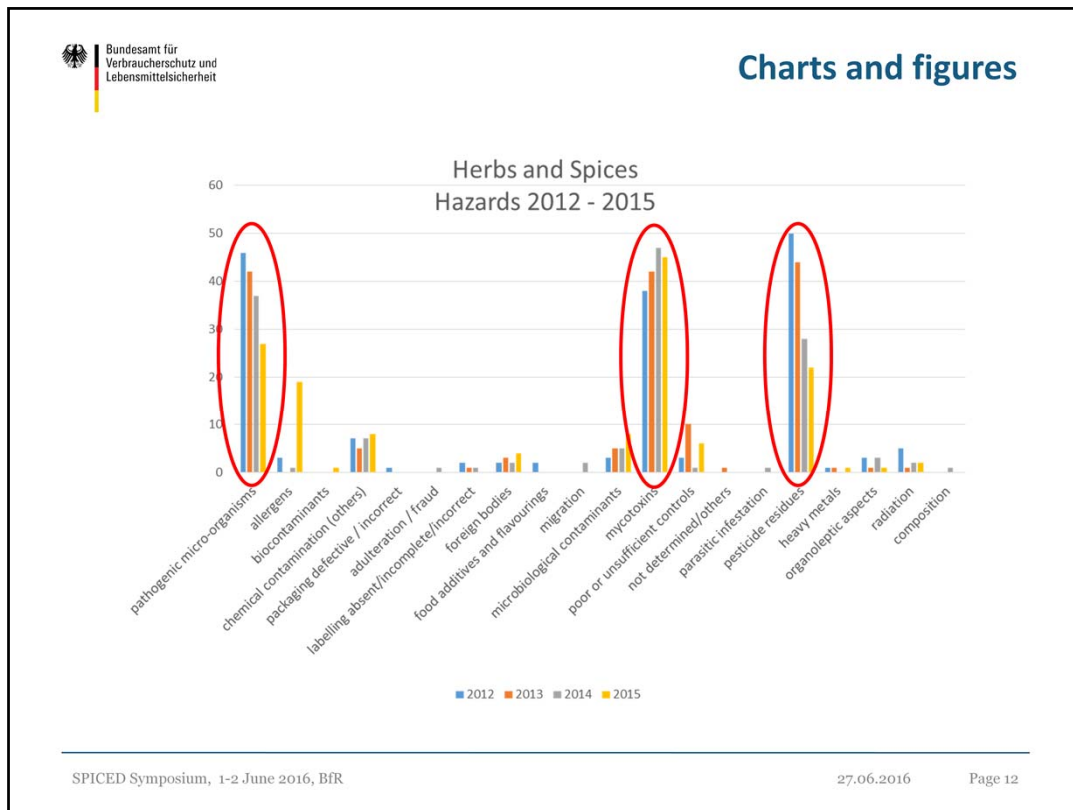


By having a look at the hazards mentioned in the RASFF we found „3 Top“ categories:

Pathogenic micro-organisms

Mycotoxins

And pesticide residues



When we look at the food category herbs and spices and the hazards found in these products in particular the same hazards are Top 3 Pathogenic microorganisms (mostly Enterobacteriaceae (Salmonella spp.); but also Bacillus cereus

Pesticide residues

And thirdly continuous burner: mycotoxins

But what is remarkable, and in my point of view an indicator for the functioning of the system, is that the findings of pathogenic MO and pesticide residues since 2012 are decreasing. One possible explanation maybe that the food business operator and competent authorities became aware of the problems and took appropriate measures to limit these hazards.

Summary – Keys to success

- **Experience** - 37 years in operation (established 1979)
- **Consistent further (technical) improvement**
- **legal bases** (e. g. implementing measures) and **SOP`s**
- **Clearly structured communication channels** (e. g. only one designated contact point per member state)
- **Confidentiality** – Information only for the competent authorities



The RASFF enables the Member States to act in a rapid and coordinated manner in response to health threats caused by food or feed.

Finally I`d like to summarize the bases for the success of the RASFF

Firstly the huge amount of experience from 30 years in operation

Secondly the steady improvements made like the use of an user friendly online application and data banks

Thirdly the legal bases underpint by SOP`s

Fourthly the clear structure of communication

And last but not least the elemantary rule of confidentiality which promote the acceptance of the system e .g. by the food business operators

**Thank you for your
attention**

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