

**Question for written answer E-004590/2014
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Frozen berries and hepatitis A

Five people are hospitalised every two days with hepatitis A caused by eating food containing frozen berries. That is the message given by the latest Ministry of Health report on the epidemic that has been developing in Italy for 14 months. The figures are quite clear: 1 463 people were affected between January 2013 and the end of February this year.

The European Food Safety Authority considers this epidemic to be international, as it has also spread to four countries in northern Europe (Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland), where 71 cases have been recorded, as well as Ireland and France, with a further 16 cases, all associated with eating berries.

The shocking side to this story is that the vast majority of people are happily continuing to eat berries (blackberries, red currants, blueberries and raspberries) in pies, pastries and ice creams, unaware that they are in danger of falling ill. The problem affects not just home consumption but above all desserts eaten in restaurants, pizzerias and other commercial outlets.

After a year of research and analysis, the task force set up by the Ministry of Health to identify the source of the epidemic has drawn a blank. The experts seem to rule out the idea that a single ingredient may have given rise to the contamination. They think it may have come from a group of producers in a single geographical area, with subsequent contamination in the processing or sorting plants in the distribution chain.

Can the Commission say why companies that make desserts or pies containing frozen berries and distribute them to restaurants, pizzerias and other outlets have not recalled their products?