

WRITTEN QUESTION P-2618/03  
by Ole Sørensen (ELDR)  
to the Commission

Subject: Urgent alert from the Commission concerning salmonella in Danish pigmeat

In connection with a current outbreak of salmonella in Sweden, the Swedish authorities have been investigating pigmeat from the Danish abattoir of TiCan as a possible source of infection. This led the Commission (Directorate for Health and Consumer Protection) to issue an 'urgent alert notification' concerning products from TiCan.

I fully recognise the value of rapid and resolute action in cases such as these, which concern citizens' health and the quality of foodstuffs. At the same time, in the light of the very serious PR and economic consequences this negative publicity has for the TiCan abattoir, this course of events gives rise to a number of questions:

1. What checks did the Commission carry out to verify the facts of the matter before issuing an urgent alert concerning products from TiCan? For example, the Commission warns against type DT 108 salmonella in TiCan's products. It subsequently appeared that the salmonella type which had been found in Sweden was actually DT 170.
2. What measures did the Commission take to investigate the possibility that the salmonella in the infected kebab derived from other sources than TiCan products? Were isolated samples taken from products from TiCan or is the whole affair based on samples from the prepared kebab? Had the unprocessed products from TiCan undergone further processing which could have been the cause of the salmonella outbreak? Has it been shown that the meat products were kept in the restaurants - and had been repackaged and sent on by the wholesalers - under proper hygienic conditions?
3. As we know, Sweden is not involved in EU cooperation concerning foodstuffs checks in this area. In the case of Danish pigmeat exporters such as TiCan, this means that some 60 samples per batch of meat are taken for analysis. This intensive checking procedure results in the fresh pigmeat having to be kept an extra 3 days before being exported to Sweden. At the same time it is clear that falling pig prices have placed Swedish pig producers in a difficult situation as regards competition. What is the Commission's view on the extent to which the Swedish authorities' actions were based on health rather than on competitive considerations?