

P-5221/07EN

Answer given by Mr Dimas
on behalf of the Commission
(28.11.2007)

Dioxins are widely encountered toxic substances. They are found in all environmental compartments, are persistent and, being fat soluble, they tend to accumulate in higher animals - including humans. Their resistance to degradation and semi-volatility means that they may be transported over long distances and give rise to trans-national exchanges of pollutants. In addition, dioxins which were released into the environment many years ago are still contributing to current exposure. Even small dioxin concentrations can cause negative effects on the environment and on human health, in particular on the most vulnerable groups like children. Human health effects include impairment of the immune system, the nervous system, the hormonal system and the reproductive functions. Dioxins are also suspected of causing cancer.

There is no single figure that relates to the maximum tolerable levels for dioxins. There are, however, a number of European instruments that set limits for dioxins:

- Directive 2000/76/EC¹ on the incineration of waste sets a limit value for air emissions of dioxins from waste incineration installations of 0.1 nanogram (ng) toxic equivalent (I-TEQ)/cubic metre (m³) and also sets a limit value for discharges of dioxins in waste water from the cleaning of exhaust gases from waste incineration installations of 0.3 ng I-TEQ/l.

- Regulation 1881/2006² setting maximum levels for certain contaminants in foodstuffs establishes maximum levels for polychlorodibenzodioxin (PCDD)/ polychlorinated dibenzofuran (PCDF) and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) for meat and meat products, fish and fishery products, milk and milk products, hen eggs and egg products, and oils and fats.

- Directive 2002/32/EC³ on undesirable substances in animal feed establishes maximum levels and action levels for PCDD/PCDF and dioxin-like PCBs and other persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in feed materials of plant origin, minerals, binders, animal fat, and other products of animal origin, fish oil, fish meal, and compound feedingstuffs, including fish feed.

- Directive 2006/77/EC⁴ establishes maximum levels and action levels for PCDD/PCDF and dioxin-like PCBs and other POPs in feed materials of plant origin, minerals, binders, animal fat, and other products of animal origin, fish oil, fish meal, and compound feedingstuffs, including fish feed.

The European Pollutant Emission Register⁵ (EPER) shows that in 2002 estimated emissions of dioxins from the ILVA installation in Taranto represented approximately 30% of Italy's total reported emissions. EPER also shows that in 2004 estimated emissions of dioxins from the ILVA installation in Taranto represented approximately 83% of Italy's total reported emissions.

The Commission has recently received reports of a chemical cloud released from the ILVA installation in Taranto. Given the concerns that have been demonstrated regarding the ILVA installation and the levels of emissions from the site, the Commission asked the Italian authorities to indicate the measures that have been or will be taken to meet the requirements of Directive 96/61/EC⁶ concerning integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC) for this particular installation. The Commission will consider further action based upon the information received from the authorities.

¹ OJ L 332, 28.12.2000.

² OJ L 364, 20.12.2006.

³ OJ L 140, 30.5.2002.

⁴ OJ L 271, 30.9.2006.

⁵ <http://eper.ec.europa.eu/eper/>

⁶ OJ L 257, 10.10.1996.

