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Clerk to the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Committee Office
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Dear Richard

At an evidence session with the Committee on 2 December it was agreed that we would provide the Committee with a note about the discovery of *Salmonella* Enteritidis PT 14b in the UK linked by evidence to eggs from Spain and in particular an individual production site in Spain. This note sets out the position on controls

1. Every Member State is obliged to enforce their own National Control Plan for the control of *Salmonella* in laying flocks of hens producing eggs for human consumption. As part of the requirements of these control plans, eggs from flocks testing positive for *Salmonella* Enteritidis or *Salmonella* Typhimurium are required to be heat treated/pasteurised before consumption. Spain has been doing this in respect of this individual production site, since it was identified as a source, by diverting production to heat treatment
2. Powers to protect human health, including where products are imported are available to Governments in exceptional or emergency circumstances under Regulation 178/2002 (Articles 53 and 54). In this particular case, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is clear that such action is not necessary because controls are in place at source. A unilateral ban on marketing within the UK of eggs from Spain would be a barrier to intra-Community trade and would be disproportionate to the risk presented to public health from any other Spanish producers not directly linked by evidence.
3. The normal inspection of eggs (by Animal Health Egg Marketing Inspectors (EMI)) at any point in the marketing chain cannot specifically identify whether the eggs are infected with *Salmonella*. These inspections are *non-destructive* and examine quality, labelling and origin (provenance) of the eggs to ensure they are marketed in accordance with production and marketing legislation, which requires compliance with National Control Plans for *Salmonella*. Only destructive testing of batches of eggs could determine whether *Salmonella* was present: this has not been judged to be necessary since controls are in place at the one confirmed source in Spain.
4. We are monitoring the situation carefully, but there is no evidence yet that this situation has negatively impacted the marketing of UK eggs. The UK industry may well seek to use this situation to their advantage now that the link to Spanish production is in the public domain and are always at liberty to press home messages about UK production.
5. The legislation covering *Salmonella* and the marketing of eggs specifically prohibits the marketing as Class A of eggs (basically any wholesale, catering and retail sales) from any flocks directly linked by evidence to *Salmonella* outbreaks. The Health Protection

Agency, FSA and Animal Health EMI, have worked together with the Spanish authorities and restrictions have been put in place at the one Spanish production site linked to the recent UK outbreaks.

6. The UK government remain in close contact with the Spanish Authorities to obtain further information on the supply chain of the eggs that were positive for *S. Enteritidis* PT14b NxCpl. The Spanish Authorities have indicated that eggs laid by the affected flock and intended for human consumption will be heat treated in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 2160/2003 (as amended by Regulation (EC) No. 1237/2007) to ensure that *Salmonella* is destroyed. This means these eggs are sent for breaking and pasteurisation prior to being marketed as egg product.

7. Eggs from all registered producers are identifiable by unique codes stamped upon their shells. The FSA has written to those UK egg distributors known to have received eggs from the affected producer and also to all UK Local Authorities to inform them that any eggs still held from this producer should be sent for heat treatment or disposal. The FSA have also encouraged the distributors to let their customers know that these eggs should not be used or that they should follow the Agency's advice on how to cook and prepare eggs safely to ensure no further risk to public health.

8. This issue was discussed at Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food on Thursday 3rd December. The FSA are considering further communications with caterers, wholesalers and distributors.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee.