

Press remarks by Commissioner Andriukaitis following the Informal Agriculture Council

Ladies and gentlemen

(As Minister Tamm said earlier) today also constituted an occasion to present the state of play as regards to the fipronil case.

I want to thank the Presidency for including it on the agenda of this informal meeting.

The impact of the **illegal use of this** product on laying hens has reached an EU wide dimension with today hundreds of farms blocked for production, 26 Member States and 19 Third Countries involved.

While the risk to human health is low, the consequences of this **criminal activity** have impacted greatly the consumer confidence. This is why we need:

- o To obtain a complete picture of what happened,
- o Collectively provide clear answers to the citizens, and
- o make sure that those who pursue in that kind of illegitimate business are found and brought to justice.

From the moment this criminal fraud case was notified to my services, the Commission has requested specific measures to be taken at national level to safeguard a high level of public health protection.

I personally held a number of calls with German, Dutch, Belgian and Austrian Ministers to discuss the state of play and actions to follow.

We also launched an European Union wide monitoring exercise investigating the possible use of illegal substances in egg products and egg producing farms.

My services have also did their outmost to reassure our trade partners as regards the safety and traceability of EU's food products.

Today, I heard detailed explanations from the ministers: it is confirmed that all suspected farms have been blocked and contaminated eggs and egg products are being destroyed.

But some work remains to be done:

Some fact-finding missions to the four most affected Member States are scheduled in late September/early October.

The EU has always drawn lessons from so-called "food crisis", and this is why

I'm already looking forward a High-level Ministerial meeting in Brussels on 26 September where we'll discuss how to strengthen the way the EU networks are dealing with food safety and food fraud function. I have invited the ministers to attend. This will be an opportunity to draw some conclusions that we will be then able to put forward to our next formal Council agenda.

Let me conclude by reassuring the EU citizens that we will remain extremely vigilant and will not tolerate that actions of few people put in question the integrity, the reputation and the stability of our entire food chain, one of the economic pillars of the Union.

I will remain personally involved and as the fipronil situation evolves almost on a daily basis, my services are working closely with those of Commissioners Malmström and Hogan to ensure that the Commission's response remains coordinated, comprehensive and forward looking.

Finally, I called once again Member States to remain open, cooperative and communicate with each other. This is essential to maintain high levels of public health protection across Europe.

Thank you.