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## Romania

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### **Romanian Veterinary Authority broadens aflatoxin testing in milk**

**Report Categories:**

Dairy and Products

Grain and Feed

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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**Report Highlights:**

Romanian Veterinary Authority has intensified control measures for aflatoxin in milk, dairy, and feed since suspicions emerged last week. As of March 11, more than 500 samples have been tested of which five returned positive for aflatoxin above acceptable limits. These five samples have been referred to the National Reference Laboratory for verification tests. Romania's hot, dry summer in 2012 impact on the country's corn crop is now appearing in the quality of the commodity retained for animal feed.

**General Information:**

According to its annual program, the Romanian Veterinary and Food Safety National Authority (ANSVSA) verifies the presence and level of aflatoxin in feed stuff, milk, and non-animal origin products. In 2012, 81 samples of milk and dairy products were tested with no positive incidents registered.

On March 5, following a report of aflatoxin in a milk sample collected at a dairy farm, the ANSVSA Chief called for an intensification of the verification process. The whole amount of milk of 13,855 liters was seized at the farm and all milk deliveries from the respective farm to milk-processors or to the automated milk distributors were detained. The Chief also ordered the contaminated feed be removed from the feeding conveyor. As a result of this latter action, after a few days of clean feed the level of aflatoxin in samples taken at the dairy farm dropped to acceptable levels.

On March 5, the same day, ANSVSA was notified by a private company that its internal monitoring program revealed that it was likely M1 aflatoxin limits may have been exceeded; and therefore, the company had withdrawn all the milk under suspicion from the food chain until lab results could be confirmed. On March 11, ANSVSA announced that the laboratory tests did not reveal an excessive level of aflatoxin thus the milk under suspicion was considered proper for consumption.

The ANSVSA Chief expanded the national verification process to the level of farms, milk collection centers, raw milk distributors, and processing plants. During the two-day control program, about 1,076 samples of raw and pasteurized milk meant for direct consumption as well as samples from processing milk were collected. As of March 12, 2013 about half of the samples had been analyzed with five found to be suspect for aflatoxin content exceeding the approved level. The suspect samples originated from three dairy farms and two processing plants (followed by about 80 MT of milk placed under seizure). The National Reference Laboratory is to confirm the M1 aflatoxin level in all five cases. In case of positive results, the respective batches will be destroyed while in the case of negative results, the batches will be released for consumption.

The above measures are a continuation of actions initiated by Romanian authorities at the end of February following the alert and measures implemented by the Serbian Agriculture Minister after detection of high levels of aflatoxin in milk exported to Romania. At that time the Romanian Veterinary Authority checked the aflatoxin presence in Romania, but it was later revealed that no milk of Serbian origin reached the Romanian market.

Aflatoxins are a group of chemicals produced by certain fungi, *Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*, which develop on oilseeds, by-products of oilseeds (e.g. meal), peanuts, grains and animal-origin products (dairy products, meat products). As a result of the consumption of the contaminated feedstuff by animals, milk, dairy products, eggs, or meat may be contaminated with aflatoxins, which are viewed as a risk for public health above certain levels of concentration.

In 2012 the severe summer drought favored development of the unwanted fungi and raised concern among Romanian producers of potential aflatoxin contaminated crops after harvest.

Although no test results have been confirmed positive by the National Reference Laboratory,

producer suspicion remains high for aflatoxin in last summer's crops which is manifesting in consumer reluctance with purchase of fluid milk. The Romanian Cattle Growers Association fears now that milk-processors will use the current context to push for a drop in the milk-acquisition price, which is already among the lowest in the European Union.