

## Salmon products could be multi-country listeria outbreak origin

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) have determined that the multi-country outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* could be linked to consumption of salmon products.

To investigate the bacteria outbreak origin, which since 2015 has affected Denmark, Germany and France, a whole genome sequencing was used, a method that made it possible to determine that ready-to-eat salmon products, such as cold-smoked and marinated salmon are the likely source.

EFSA highlighted that by 8 October 2018, 12 cases including four deaths had been reported in the affected countries.

### Epidemiological and microbiological investigations of humans

As of 8 October 2018, three EU countries had identified 10 confirmed cases reported on or after 1 January 2017 and 2 historical confirmed cases reported from 2015 to 2016 (Table 1), four of the cases died due to or with the disease.

**Table 1. *Listeria monocytogenes* outbreak cases by country and case classification, EU, 2014 to 2018, as of 8 October 2018**

Reporting country	Confirmed cases (reported on or after 1 January 2017)		Historical confirmed cases (reported before 1 January 2017)		Total number of cases
	2018	2017	2016	2015	
Denmark	0	5	0	1	6
France	0	0	1	0	1
Germany	1	4	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>

The European sanitary authority recalled that in August 2017, Denmark reported the first cluster of cases linked to the consumption of ready-to-eat smoked salmon produced in Poland. Control measures were implemented and other EU Member States and competent authorities were informed.

In October 2017, France reported the detection of the same strain of *Listeria* in marinated salmon originating from the same Polish processing company as identified in the Danish outbreak investigation.



The most recent case linked to the outbreak was notified in Germany in May 2018. EFSA explains that due to the lack of whole genome sequencing data from the environmental and food samples taken at the Polish processing plant, it is not possible at present to confirm whether the contamination occurred in the suspected plant. Moreover, until information on the Norwegian primary producers of the salmon used in the contaminated batches has been reported and assessed, the possibility of contamination at primary production level cannot be excluded. The identification of the same *Listeria* strain in a salmon product in France and a new human case in Germany suggest that the source of contamination may still be active and that contaminated products have been distributed to other EU countries than Denmark. Pregnant women, the elderly and immunocompromised people are at higher risk of contracting listeriosis.

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