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EU policy on contaminants in feed: strategy, regulatory update and outlook

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Directive 2002/32/EC of 7 May 2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council on undesirable substances in animal feed is the framework for the European Union action on undesirable substances (contaminants) in feed.

This Framework Directive provides that:

* products intended for animal feed may enter for use in the European Union from third countries, be put into circulation and/or used in the European Union only if they are sound, genuine and of merchantable quality and therefore when correctly used do not represent any danger to human health, animal health or to the environment or could adversely affect livestock production.

* in order to protect animal and public health and the environment, maximum levels for specific undesirable substances shall be established where necessary (by comitology)

* provides for mandatory consultation of a scientific body (EFSA) for all provisions which may have an effect upon animal and public health and the environment. .

* products intended for animal feed containing levels of an undesirable substance that exceed the established maximum level may not be mixed for dilution purposes with the same, or other, products intended for animal feed and may not be used for the production of compound feed.

Based on the provisions and principles laid down in this framework Directive, maximum levels for a whole range of undesirable substances, have been established at EU level.

With the entry into force of Directive 2002/32/EC, the introduction of the principle of non-dilution was an important and far-reaching measure. In order to protect public and animal health, it is important that the overall contamination of the food and feed chain is reduced to a level as low as reasonably achievable providing a high level of public health and animal health protection. The deletion of the possibility of dilution is a powerful mean to stimulate all operators throughout the chain to apply the necessary prevention measures to avoid contamination as much as possible. The prohibition of dilution accompanied with the necessary control measures has and will effectively contribute to safer feed.

Following requests of the European Commission, the Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain (CONTAM) from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has completed a series of 30 risk assessments undertaken over the last 5 years on undesirable substances in animal feed reviewing the possible risks for animal and human health due to the presence of these substances in animal feed.

The presentation will focus on the strategy followed in EU policy on contaminants in feed, recent developments and outlook to the future.