



Breaking News on Food and Beverage Processing and Packaging

Japanese radiation hits Europe but levels too low for concern

By Rory Harrington, 08-Apr-2011

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Minute levels of radiation have been detected in a number of European countries in the wake of the Japanese nuclear disaster but officials have declared levels are too low to pose a health hazard.

Ireland confirmed that low-level radiation had been identified in milk samples but that almost 100,000 litres would need to be consumed in a single day to pose a health risk.

It added that similarly small levels had also been reported by authorities in France and Greece.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) confirmed the detection of a minute trace of Iodine-131 in three milk samples taken in the country last weekend on behalf of the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII). But the body said the *"levels identified in the samples are minuscule and pose no concern for consumer health"*.

Legal limits set to protect consumer health are thousands of times greater than the levels detected in the milk samples, said Prof Alan Reilly, FSAI chief executive,

"Consumers should have absolutely no concerns in relation to this finding. A person would have to drink some 96,000 litres of milk with Iodine-131 at current levels to exceed the annual safe limit set to protect consumers," he added.

He said that some fall out had been expected given recent weather condition.

"There was some evidence that the spread of contamination from Japan, albeit at an extremely low level, would eventually be found here," added the FSAI chief. *"Similar findings of low levels of Iodine-131 in milk have also been reported from France and Greece."*

Grass and vegetables

The UK Food Standards Agency also said radio active levels detected in the UK were *"far too low to cause any concerns over the safety of any food"*.

While raising the possibility that iodine-131 could enter the food chain via grass consumed by cows, the body stressed levels would not be harmful. It added that the radioactive isotope could also settle on vegetable surfaces but would soon decay or be washed away.

Tests on milk samples in Scotland had not detected any traces of iodine-131, said the FSA.

At the end of March the European Union unveiled moves to step up controls on food imports from Japan in the wake of the nuclear accident at Fukushima

Under the move, Japanese food and feed shipments have to come with safety certificates and be subject to random testing at EU borders. An early warning system will also require importers to give competent authorities in the bloc two days notice of a consignment's arrival.

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