

Baseline study on the prevalence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in specific ready-to-eat foods

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As part of an EU-wide baseline study, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) has evaluated and assessed 2540 study results on the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in the three product groups smoked and gravad fish, soft and semi-soft cheese, and heat-treated meat products. The samples were tested by the competent authorities in the federal state in the period from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2011.¹

As regards the proportion of positive samples and the presence of serotypes, the test results for the most part concur with earlier findings of official monitoring programmes. Overall, the study results show that the specified microbiological criteria for *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat products are not consistently complied with. The BfR draws the public's attention to the fact that products exceeding the limits fixed by legislation for *Listeria monocytogenes* within the sell-by date are not marketable. By taking suitable measures, food business operators must ensure that only foods are placed on the market which do not exceed these criteria when handled and stored correctly. If limits are exceeded, there is a risk of consumers contracting a listeria infection. Especially sensitive persons, including pregnant women and immunodeficient persons, should, as a precaution, refrain from eating products such as smoked or gravad fish and raw milk cheese to prevent listeriosis.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German on <http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/grundlagenstudie-zur-erhebung-der-praevalenz-von-listeria-monocytogenes-in-bestimmten-verzehrsfertigen-lebensmitteln.pdf>

¹ The results of the study form an integral part of the report on the findings of the zoonosis monitoring programme 2011 which was published by the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL).