

Economic impact of E. coli on the agricultural industry

'Fear' is what is stopping the sales of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and other fruits and vegetables right across Europe following the recent E. coli scare in Germany. The result has had a devastating impact on the livelihoods of farmers across Europe, especially those in Spain. Tens of thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables have had to be destroyed, especially cucumbers, as it was originally thought the E. coli outbreak originated from Spanish cucumbers. The economic impact has seen a meltdown in the Spanish agricultural industry. Most of the harvest has had to be destroyed or simply ploughed back into the soil. Tests have been ongoing in Germany to establish exactly where and from what the deadly outbreak of E. coli started. The result was that people suddenly stopped buying Spanish vegetables, especially cucumbers. Spanish farmers have demonstrated, demanding compensation from the EU.

The problem was made worse when Russia then banned all vegetable imports from the EU. Europe exports some €600m worth of vegetables to Russia each year, with Spain, Germany and Poland being the biggest exporters. The European Commission condemned the move. The ban meant not only thousands of farmers across Europe suddenly had no market for their products but transport companies, wholesale markets and retailers suffered as well. It is a huge market that is thought to be worth an estimated £50bn (€56bn) a year. Ironically, there have been no infections of E. coli in Spain. The EU is facing serious compensation claims from its farmers who now face serious cash flow problems. The E. coli outbreak is one of the most deadly in years. So far, it has resulted in 16 deaths in Germany, one in Sweden and more than 1,500 people have been infected. The World Health Organisation says the E. coli bacterium is a new, mutant strain. Until it is brought under control the demand for buying fresh fruit and vegetables will continue to plummet. Consumers have either decided to eat the vegetables from their gardens or have switched to frozen products.

Fruit and vegetables should always be washed before eating them. They should also be peeled or cooked. You should wash your hands regularly to prevent person-to-person spread of the E.coli strain.

Note: This story has moved on since it was originally written

Category: Economic / Business / Agriculture

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. E. coli outbreak in Europe: Briefly, what three things do you know about the recent deadly E. coli outbreak in Europe? Go round the room swapping details.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) What is the latest on this story?
- d) Is this just a media scare by the pharmaceutical companies?

6. Let's think! Think of five economic areas the outbreak of E. coli has impacted upon. Then add five suggested solutions to help contain the outbreak. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five economic areas the outbreak has impacted on	Five suggested solutions to help contain it
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. Let's think! In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **EU E. coli outbreak**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

8. Let's roleplay 1: *In pairs*. One of you is a fruit and vegetable seller in a local market in Germany. The other normally buys weekly some fresh fruit and vegetables including Spanish cucumbers from the market seller. Roleplay what happens when the buyer meets the market seller. *5 minutes*.

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9. **Let's roleplay 2: CNN FM:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *CNN FM* radio studio in NY. Today's interview is about: *The deadly E. coli outbreak in Europe.*

1	An economic journalist	3	A Spanish farmer
2	Russian Health Ministry expert	4	EU Minister

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

10. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the vegetables.
- 2) Who have demonstrated and where?
- 3) Who banned EU vegetable imports?
- 4) Who condemned what?
- 5) How much is the market worth?

Student B

- 1) What have consumers switched to?
- 2) What should consumers do to protect themselves?
- 3) What is the EU facing?
- 4) How many people have died?
- 5) What is stopping the sale of fruits and vegetables across Europe?

11. **Let's think!** Think of five fruits and vegetables. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these. Which are your favourite?

Five fruits	Five vegetables
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The economic impact of E. coli on the agricultural industry in Europe.** Your e-mail can be read out in class.

13. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) E. coli _____
- b) Spanish cucumbers _____
- c) People _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Is this story media driven?
- 2) When was the last time you ate a cucumber?
- 3) Do you wash your fruit and vegetables?
- 4) How careful are you when preparing fresh fruit/vegetable products?
- 5) What is the economic impact for the EU?
- 6) What is the economic impact for Spanish farmers?
- 7) Is Russia right to have imposed a ban like it did?
- 8) How deadly is the E. coli disease?
- 9) Should Spain sue Germany for the agricultural business lost due to Germany pointing the finger originally at it?
- 10) What three bits of advice would you give to the Spanish farmers?

Student B questions

- 1) Have you considered planting your own vegetables now?
- 2) Do you eat salad? If yes, what does this include?
- 3) How are market sellers affected by this outbreak of E. coli? Explain.
- 4) Should the EU pay compensation to the Spanish farmers?
- 5) What is the economic impact for transport companies? Explain.
- 6) What is the economic impact for Spain and Germany?
- 7) What precautions are you taking?
- 8) Will you be eating fresh produce from Spain any time soon?
- 9) How bad is this outbreak of E. coli for the agricultural business?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! The E. coli outbreak in Europe

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Consider the following to discuss:

The E. coli outbreak in Europe

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Economic impact of E. coli on the agricultural industry
'(1)____' is what is stopping the sales of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and other fruits and (2)____ right across Europe following the recent E. coli scare in Germany. The result has had a devastating (3)____ on the livelihoods of (4)____ across Europe, especially those in Spain. Tens of thousands of tons of (5)____ and vegetables have had to be destroyed, especially cucumbers, as it was originally thought the E. coli outbreak originated from Spanish (6)____. The economic impact has seen a (7)____ in the Spanish agricultural industry. Most of the harvest has had to be destroyed or simply ploughed back into the soil. (8)____ have been ongoing in Germany to establish exactly where and from what the deadly outbreak of E. coli started. The result was that people suddenly stopped buying Spanish vegetables, especially cucumbers. Spanish farmers have demonstrated, demanding compensation from the EU.

farmers
impact
cucumbers
fruit
meltdown
vegetables
tests
fear

The (1)____ was made worse when Russia then banned all vegetable (2)____ from the EU. Europe exports some €600m worth of vegetables to Russia each year, with Spain, Germany and Poland being the biggest exporters. The European Commission condemned the move. The (3)____ meant not only thousands of farmers across Europe suddenly had no market for their (4)____ but transport companies, wholesale markets and retailers suffered as well. It is a huge market that is thought to be worth an estimated £50bn (€56bn) a year. (5)____, there have been no infections of E. coli in Spain. The EU is facing serious compensation claims from its farmers who now face serious cash flow problems. The E. coli (6)____ is one of the most deadly in years. So far, it has resulted in 16 deaths in Germany, one in Sweden and more than 1,500 people have been infected. The World Health Organisation says the E. coli bacterium is a new, (7)____ strain. Until it is brought under control the demand for buying fresh fruit and vegetables will continue to (8)____. Consumers have either decided to eat the vegetables from their gardens or have switched to frozen products.

products
plummet
ironically
outbreak
problem
ban
imports
mutant

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Economic impact of E. coli on the agricultural industry

'Fear' is what is stopping the sales of fresh _____ and other fruits and vegetables right across Europe following the recent E. coli scare in Germany. The result has had a _____ on the livelihoods of farmers across Europe, especially those in Spain. Tens of thousands of tons of _____ have had to be destroyed, especially cucumbers, as it was originally thought the E. coli outbreak originated from _____. The economic impact has seen a meltdown in the Spanish agricultural industry. Most of the harvest has had to be destroyed or _____ into the soil. Tests have been ongoing in Germany to establish exactly where and from what the deadly outbreak of E. coli started. The result was that people suddenly stopped buying Spanish vegetables, _____. Spanish farmers have demonstrated, demanding compensation from the EU.

The problem was made _____ then banned all vegetable imports from the EU. Europe exports some €600m worth of vegetables to Russia each year, with Spain, Germany and Poland being the biggest exporters. The _____ condemned the move. The ban meant not only thousands of farmers across Europe suddenly had no market for their products but transport companies, wholesale markets and retailers suffered as well. It is a _____ thought to be worth an estimated £50bn (€56bn) a year. Ironically, there have been no infections of E. coli in Spain. The EU is facing _____ claims from its farmers who now face serious cash flow problems. The E. coli outbreak is one of the most deadly in years. So far, it has resulted in 16 deaths in Germany, one in Sweden and more than 1,500 people have been infected. The World Health Organisation says the E. coli bacterium is a new, mutant strain. Until it is brought under control the demand for _____ and vegetables will continue to plummet. Consumers have either decided to eat the vegetables from their gardens or have _____ products.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Economic impact of E. coli on the agricultural industry
'Fear' is what is stopping (1)___ sales of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and other fruits and vegetables right across Europe following the recent E. coli scare (2)___ Germany. The result has had (3)___ devastating impact (4)___ the livelihoods (5)___ farmers across Europe, especially those in Spain. Tens of thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables have had to be destroyed, especially cucumbers, as (6)___ was originally thought the E. coli outbreak originated from Spanish cucumbers. The economic impact has seen a meltdown in the Spanish agricultural industry. Most of the harvest has had to be destroyed (7)___ simply ploughed back into the soil. Tests have been ongoing in Germany to establish exactly where (8)___ from what the deadly outbreak of E. coli started. The result was that people suddenly stopped buying Spanish vegetables, especially cucumbers. Spanish farmers have demonstrated, demanding compensation from the EU.

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The problem was made worse (1)___ Russia (2)___ banned all vegetable imports from the EU. Europe exports some €600m worth of vegetables to Russia each year, (3)___ Spain, Germany and Poland being the biggest exporters. The European Commission condemned the move. The ban meant not only thousands of farmers across Europe suddenly had no market for their products but transport companies, wholesale markets and retailers suffered as well. It is a huge market (4)___ is thought to be worth an estimated £50bn (€56bn) a year. Ironically, (5)___ have been no infections of E. coli in Spain. The EU is facing serious compensation claims (6)___ its farmers who now face serious cash flow problems. The E. coli outbreak is one of the most deadly in years. So far, it has resulted in 16 deaths in Germany, one in Sweden and more (7)___ 1,500 people have been infected. The World Health Organisation says the E. coli bacterium is a new, mutant strain. Until it is brought under control the demand for buying fresh fruit and vegetables will continue to plummet. Consumers have either decided to eat the vegetables from (8)___ gardens or have switched to frozen products.

than
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there
that

SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	tomatoes	11	regularly
2	compensation	12	ironically
3	demonstrated	13	especially
4	infections	14	suddenly
5	plummet	15	thought
6	vegetables	16	meltedown
7	agricultural	17	establish
8	wholesale	18	livelihoods
9	bacterium	19	impact
10	cucumbers	20	tomatoes

LINKS

<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/06/04/europe.e.coli/index.html>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8557897/Travellers-to-Germany-should-avoid-salad.html>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/8557268/Shoppers-reject-fresh-produce-as-E.-coli-outbreak-continues.html>
<http://www.france24.com/en/20110604-deadly-bacteria-poisoning-outbreak-stabilises-ecoli-vegetables-health-germany#>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Economic impact of E. coli on the agricultural industry: '**Fear**' is what is stopping the sales of fresh tomatoes, cucumbers and other fruits and **vegetables** right across Europe following the recent E. coli scare in Germany. The result has had a devastating **impact** on the livelihoods of **farmers** across Europe, especially those in Spain. Tens of thousands of tons of **fruit** and vegetables have had to be destroyed, especially cucumbers, as it was originally thought the E. coli outbreak originated from Spanish **cucumbers**. The economic impact has seen a **meltedown** in the Spanish agricultural industry. Most of the harvest has had to be destroyed or simply ploughed back into the soil. **Tests** have been ongoing in Germany to establish exactly where and from what the deadly outbreak of E. coli started. The result was that people suddenly stopped buying Spanish vegetables, especially cucumbers. Spanish farmers have demonstrated, demanding compensation from the EU.

The **problem** was made worse when Russia then banned all vegetable **imports** from the EU. Europe exports some €600m worth of vegetables to Russia each year, with Spain, Germany and Poland being the biggest exporters. The European Commission condemned the move. The **ban** meant not only thousands of farmers across Europe suddenly had no market for their **products** but transport companies, wholesale markets and retailers suffered as well. It is a huge market that is thought to be worth an estimated £50bn (€56bn) a year. **Ironically**, there have been no infections of E. coli in Spain. The EU is facing serious compensation claims from its farmers who now face serious cash flow problems. The E. coli **outbreak** is one of the most deadly in years. So far, it has resulted in 16 deaths in Germany, one in Sweden and more than 1,500 people have been infected. The World Health Organisation says the E. coli bacterium is a new, **mutant** strain. Until it is brought under control the demand for buying fresh fruit and vegetables will continue to **plummet**. Consumers have either decided to eat the vegetables from their gardens or have switched to frozen products. **(V2)**

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