

**A string of countries have banned the import of French poultry following a bird flu outbreak last month in a farm in the southwestern area of Dordogne. Amongst them, Japan, the largest importer of French foie gras.**

Japan, China, South Korea, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia and Thailand have stopped imports of French poultry, the agriculture ministry said on Thursday night. “But the list does not include France’s 27 European Union partners, who have accepted containment measures proposed by Paris under World Health Organisation guidelines,” said Loïc Evain, deputy head of the ministry’s food division.

The French government banned on Thursday exports of French live birds and eggs for hatching coming from the southwestern area of Dordogne, the only French area infected with the avian flu. Containment measures have been applied, a close monitoring of 70 neighbouring farms has been set up and more than 14,000 ducks and 1,000 geese have been culled earlier this week.

“The avian flu can not be transmitted to humans through food, meat, nor eggs and foie gras,” the ministry said repeatedly.

“Unfortunately some countries’ first reaction is to close their borders and only then to discuss strategy,” Evain regrets as South Korea imposed its ban last week on all French poultry although the ban does not concern the entire French territory but only the Dordogne area.

South Korea is one of the largest importers of French foie gras along with Japan, and imported in 2015 one tonne of French duck meat, 13 tonnes of foie gras, 884,000 chicks and 41,000 ducklings.

Fortunately “for the time being there is no decision” to block French poultry by Gulf region states which are major consumers said Evain.

More than a third of the French poultry meat is exported, mostly to the Middle East region and the European Union. More than 583,000 tonnes were sold abroad in 2014 for about 1,1 billion euro.