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About Sino Silliker

Happy 2018 New Year

Sending our warmest Thoughts and best Wishes for a Wonderful Holiday Season and a Successful and Glorious Happy New Year!



Focus on China



China: Premier Li Keqiang "agriculture imports from CEE will increase"

Premier Li Keqiang said on Monday that China would increase agricultural imports from Central and Eastern European countries and provide greater financial support to China-CEEC cooperative projects.

He made the announcement during the seventh China-CEEC Economic and Trade Forum, which attracted more than 1,000 business people to Hungary's capital, Budapest.

China wants to import more agricultural goods like honey, fruit, meat and dairy products, Li said.

"Next year, an import exposition will be hosted by China, and ... I hope CEE nations will take part in it and win Chinese consumers," he said.

Li said that the financing should be expanded. China supports the financing of cooperative projects by commercial financial institutions and supports enterprises from CEE nations issuing panda bonds in China, he said. A panda bond is a renminbi-denominated bond from a non-Chinese issuer. He said renminbi financing will be supported for cooperative projects.

Li also announced the establishment of a China-CEEC bank consortium, to which the China Development Bank will grant loans worth 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion).

Li said a second round of the China-Central and Eastern Europe Investment Cooperation Fund, initiated by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China last year, has been completed to raise \$1 billion. The fund will mainly invest in CEE nations.

In the past five years, China-CEEC cooperation has registered achievements that benefit people from both sides, Li said on his arrival on Sunday. As part of China-Europe ties, China-CEEC cooperation has promoted the development of countries in the sub region, balanced development for all of Europe and the continent's process of integration, he said.

The measures were the latest move in financial cooperation. A financial holding company was established in November 2016 to fund projects that promote Chinese-made equipment and products after the fifth Meeting of Heads of Government of China-Central and Eastern European Countries in Riga, Latvia.

Minister of Commerce Zhong Shan said that the first such forum was held in Budapest six years ago and the event has played a vital role in boosting economic ties and promoting cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said at the forum that European countries now need technological and financial support from China and Asia, and the China-CEEC mechanism, also known as "16+1" cooperation, will benefit the EU and all of Europe. Orban said large enterprises in Asia are increasingly participating in the Western market with first-class technologies, which has played a key role in the development of CEE nations.

Wang Yiwei, a professor of international studies at Renmin University of China, said CEE countries are still in the process of changing from socialist economies into market economies and they want to attract more investment from China.

Investing in the area will also provide an opportunity for China to enter the West European market, he said. Also, "16+1" cooperation is a highlight in Belt and Road cooperation, and the initiative will promote level and significant "16 + 1" cooperation, he added.

China phasing out more and more pesticides

China plans to ban another 12 highly toxic pesticides within five years, State media reported recently. According to the South China Morning Post, this is part of a government program to improve the safety of its farm produce.

This all comes amid an ongoing campaign to improve the environment and, in particular, tackle severe soil pollution. Beijing has already withdrawn 22 highly toxic pesticides from use, prohibiting the use of these products on fruit, vegetables and tea.

But a number of highly toxic chemicals remained in use. And China certainly wants zero growth in the use of polluting chemical fertilisers by 2020; the ministry has already issued a notice banning the highly toxic substances endosulfan and methyl bromide by 2019. A call went out for more R&D to produce highly effective alternatives with low toxicity.



Ministry of Agriculture issued “Letter about soliciting opinions on standard for maximum residue limit of veterinary drugs in food of animal origin”

On November 30th, 2017, Ministry of Agriculture issued “Letter about soliciting opinions on standard for maximum residue limit of veterinary drugs in food of animal origin” involving 267 veterinary drugs, including 2191 limit value of 104 veterinary drugs stipulated in approved maximum residue limit for food of animal origin, 154 veterinary drugs allowed in food of animal origin with no need for residue limits and 9

veterinary drugs allowed for therapeutic use while absent in food of animal origin. The list of veterinary drugs and compounds banned in food animals would be issued separately.

International News

Organic apple demand keeps growing



This coming season Washington expects to see 20 million bushels of organic apples. Viva Tierra specialises in 100% organic products, such as apples. “There is no indication, whatsoever, that the demand for organic fresh produce, such as apples, is slowing down”, says Luis Acuña, this company’s President and CEO, who spoke to us from Santiago, Chile.

Viva Tierra has growers in North and South America. According to Luis, volumes of organic apples grown in Washington are slightly higher than last year. “The Granny Smith is a very popular variety of organic apple and Cripps Pinks are also gaining popularity.”

Overseas markets

“Our sales to Asia, Malaysia and Taiwan in particular, are increasing”, says Luis. China is another potential market, but discussions are still ongoing between both China and the USA with regards to opening the Chinese market to

American organic apples. Not only Asia, but also Europe is one of the destinations this season. The frost in Europe has opened up sales opportunities for the US-based trading company. “There is a gap in, mainly, the UK, due to a lack of product.”

Southern Hemisphere frosts

While the Northern Hemisphere is in full swing, the Southern Hemisphere is in the middle of the blossoming period, which had overcome some overnight frosts. “Although our growers in Chile were not affected by the frost, it is too early to predict the size of volumes expected from the Southern Hemisphere,” says Luis.

This fruit trading company prides itself on creating a supply-and-demand balance that is a win-win for all involved, from the grower to the customer. “Our consumers see that our growers get something back. It is not a one-sided way of doing business”, says Luis. Viva Tierra also sells organic pears, kiwifruit, onions, and other seasonal fresh organic produce.

FDA Warns Consumers About Adverse Events Associated with Limbrel, a Dietary Supplement

The FDA is alerting consumers about “potentially life-threatening health problems” linked to Limbrel, a dietary supplement that is marketed to “manage the metabolic processes associated with osteoarthritis.” The company is not removing the product from the market. This product is marketed as a medical food, but the FDA’s investigation determined that it is an unapproved new drug. And the FDA does not have mandatory recall authority over drug products.

The FDA is reminding consumers “not to use Limbrel because of the risk of

drug-induced liver injury, and a lung condition called hypersensitivity pneumonitis. Consumers taking this product should stop immediately and contact their health care provider. Health care providers who are aware that their patients are taking Limbrel should advise them to stop using it.” Limbrel is available in capsule form in two dosages: Limbrel250 and Limbrel500.

Public health officials are investigating a rise in reports of serious adverse events involving the product. Those problems include drug-induced liver injury and a lung condition called hypersensitivity pneumonitis. Those investigations began in early September.

As of November 21, 2017, there have been a total of 194 adverse event reports regarding Limbrel. In 30 of those cases, FDA medical experts found that the supplement was “likely associated with these adverse events.” If you are taking this product, discontinue it immediately and contact your health care provider.

Symptoms of drug-induced liver injury can include jaundice, nausea, fatigue, and gastrointestinal discomfort. Symptoms of hypersensitivity pneumonitis can vary. They may include fever, chills, headache, cough, chronic bronchitis, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, weight loss, and fatigue. If you experience any of

these symptoms, contact your health care provider immediately.

The FDA first contacted Primus Pharmaceuticals about these reported adverse events on November 8, 2017, and requested information about

Limbrel’s formula. The FDA is reviewing the formula, and is testing samples of the product.

US organic garlic supplies healthy for this time of year

Garlic supplies are healthy coming out of Pennsylvania. “We have a good supply of garlic out there on our farms. We only do certified organic garlic and it’s all grown here in Pennsylvania. We actually just had a grower call in this morning asking if we could help move their garlic. But our supplies are so strong that we didn’t yet need their supply,” says Emily Best of Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative in Hustontown, Pa.

Supplies of garlic are about the same as last year at this time.

Demand steady

Meanwhile demand is strong for garlic. “Our sales are very specialized—we’re a local provider so we sell to restaurants and retailers in the mid-Atlantic, Maryland, DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania,” says Best. “Our sales have been good but our prices are above average for the commodity-priced market. Our sales have been pretty typical for this time of year.” Tuscarora’s garlic is priced at approximately 30 per cent higher than that on the commodity market.

Tuscarora is also feeling that holiday demand pick up that comes with so many commodities this time of year. “We had a little boost prior to Thanksgiving as our retailers tried to make sure their shelves were full and I imagine we’ll see that happen in a couple of weeks for the holidays,” says Best, who notes that most of its product it hopes to move in December and January to avoid an excess in inventory. “January is still a good month for us—garlic sales work into people wanting to eat healthy before the holidays.”



Overview of Global Avocado Market

The World Avocado Organization has designated November as the world's avocado month. The Netherlands has offered its capital for a whole month for this event, so Amsterdam is now becoming the "avocado capital of the world." Looking purely at the trends worldwide, avocados hardly need any promotion. The demand for the fruit is growing worldwide. Prices are stable and even show a slightly rising trend. Several countries want to benefit from this growth, so a lot is being planted. And yet there is still a promotional campaign planned in Europe for the spring of 2018 where the focus will be on tastings.

Mexican exports are declining

Mexico exported 722,000 tonnes of avocados between January and October this year. Last year, the export figure for the same period amounted to 784,000 tonnes, so exports are about 10% lower this year. This decline affects all destination markets, the most important being the US, Japan, Canada, Europe and Central America.

Mexican exports to China, Japan and Europe ground to a halt for a number of months. As a result, other production areas took their chance. A trader says that Peru and Chile, among others, are taking over these markets with "much better prices." He argues that this development and the figures that go with it must be closely monitored by the Mexican sector. Mexico must address all factors that cause the country to lose its competitiveness, as "they really want to maintain the dominant position of Mexican Hass avocados on the global market."

Colombia is also a strong competitor on the US market. In the coming years, Colombia will increasingly become a competitor to Mexico, alongside Peru and Chile.

Colombia: rising star in the avocado market

The first Colombian exporters started negotiations on exports to Asia, starting with China. Ultimately, the exporters also want to reach other countries on the continent, namely Malaysia, Japan and South Korea. According to an exporter, Colombian avocados are similar to the Mexican, which is currently preferred in Asia. "That gives us a big advantage over the Peruvian and Chilean avocados," says an exporter. The country is ready; the interest of Chinese importers has been awakened and all that remains is for the Chinese government to conduct the final verification operations.

Traditionally, the country focuses on exporting to European markets such as Spain, France, the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. Production has increased in recent years and this rising trend will continue in the coming years, so exporters are happy with the new markets. Also, avocados have been shipped to Dubai for the first time this year. It has been a small volume, just 24 tonnes, but the exporter is optimistic about this market. The Middle East is an increasingly important destination. Moreover, the first avocados have been shipped to Hong Kong. Colombia has about 15,000 hectares of young avocado trees that have not yet reached their maximum yield. The peak in the season is expected between October and December.

Peru is committed to growth

Due to the rapidly growing demand for Hass avocados worldwide, production has increased in recent years. According to the latest figures, 1,500 hectares of Hass avocados are planted annually in Peru. The acreage amounts to 28,000 hectares, with a large share planted with young crops. That area will only increase, giving exports a push. At the moment, plantings are underway mainly

in the region of Olmos, in Lambayeque. Despite the fear of damage by El Niño, 230,000 tonnes will be exported this year. It is too early to talk about the next season, but the first prospects point to a 15% increase over this year's production.

This year, exports to China have doubled compared to 2016 and for the next season there is again talk of a doubling in exports. Furthermore, work is being done on access to the South Korean market. The US market accounted for 25% of exports this season, while it normally absorbs 20% of the production. Also, avocados have been shipped for the first time to India.

Chile is betting on China

In the 2016/2017 season, Chilean exports to China stood at 13,000 tonnes. This means that, according to one exporter, Chile has overtaken Mexico as the largest supplier. A few years ago, avocados were unknown in China, but the demand has increased enormously. According to an exporter's calculations, exports to China will reach 18,000 tonnes next year.

Costa Rica opens borders for Mexico

The problems surrounding the avocado supply from Mexico will soon be resolved. Since May 2015, there have been no Mexican Hass avocados available. Costa Rica closed its borders to Mexico because it feared the entry of the Sunblotch disease. The country also closed its borders to avocados from the US, Australia, Spain, Ghana, Guatemala, Israel, South Africa, Bolivia and Venezuela. In the proposed protocols, Costa Rica asks for a guarantee that the avocados won't come from a risk area. Additionally, the products must be inspected in the country of origin.

Dominican Republic dominant in green skin

Although the island has a large production, it is not among the top 10 largest exporters. Production is therefore mainly sold on the domestic market. The green skin avocados have a share of 85% of the production. As a result, the Dominican Republic has a strong position in the American market, despite 96% of the market being dominated by the Hass. There is a market for green avocados on the east coast, where most of the Caribbean immigrants live. The Dominican Republic has a 98% share of the US market when it comes to green skin avocados. From March, the country is in a monopolistic position because the season is then over in Florida.

US: huge demand during football season

There is a good supply of Mexican avocados. "Chile and Peru are not yet on the market, so Mexico will remain the only supplier until the beginning of 2018," says an importer. In his estimates, there is currently slightly more volume available than at this same time last year. This has to do, among other factors, with the expansion of the acreage. Every year, 65,000 to 85,000 new trees are planted in Mexico, according to the importer. The demand for avocados remains high during the football season. There is room for around 18.14 million kilos of avocados in the market.



The harvest of Hass avocados in California was disappointing, leaving more room on the market for Peru.

Australia adjusts prospects

Prospects initially pointed to the production reaching a record 75,000 tonnes, but this figure has now been adjusted downwards as a result of the early start of the storm season and a disappointing fruit setting. Avocados Australia expects a stable supply in the coming months. Volumes could decline in the first quarter of the New Year. Given the rising demand, prices are not expected to fall.

New Zealand sector is recording massive growth

The value of the New Zealand sector has risen in recent years to 200.3 million dollars. A year earlier, it was still 133.9 million dollars. The production stands at 7.8 million 5.5 kilo trays, or 43,375 tonnes. Of this, 4.7 million are exported and 2.1 million trays are intended for the domestic market. Exports are expected to increase further in the coming years now that New Zealand and China have signed a trade agreement and the export protocols have been drawn up. However, the main sales market remains neighbouring Australia, which accounts for 3.9 million trays. In Asia, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand are the most important destinations.

Avocado plantations in the country are being bought for very high prices and land is being reserved for new plantations. This trend can be observed mainly in the far north of the country.

Kenya: from coffee to avocado

A lot of money is being invested in cultivation in Kenya. Coffee and tea plantations are being transformed into avocado plantations. The growers have no problems getting trees and seedlings. The challenge is to harvest at the right time and keep the cold chain in check.

South Africa hopeful about next season

Last season was not the best for South African exporters, with 11 million boxes exported. The market was good, but the volumes were so small that hardly any profit could be made. This year was an "off year", which meant lower volumes. The drought in the country made the situation even more dramatic. Next year, it will be an "on year" again and South Africa expects a big harvest. Prospects point to a volume totalling 15 to 16 million boxes. The new harvest has yet to arrive, and growers hope that no natural disasters will happen until that time. Also, there is still plenty of investment in acreage expansions. A large producer expects to expand the acreage by 200 to 300 hectares every year over the next four to five years.

Morocco is trying to gain a foothold on the world market

This North African country is not the first one that comes to mind when it comes to avocados. The season runs from January to April. "This year we are optimistic that the volume and quality will be good," says a grower. There are some challenges. In some parts of the country there has been no rain, while in other parts the frost could take a toll on the harvest. Given the competition on the world market, it is difficult to gain a foothold in it.

Israel expects smaller volume

The season is not yet in full swing. The green avocado production has arrived first; then the Hass harvest will follow with small volumes. From January, both varieties will be readily available. The Ettinger is currently on the market with a price of 5 Euro in November. In the same month a year earlier, the price stood at 7 Euro. When the Pinkerton arrives, the price will go up to at least 10 Euro, according to an exporter.

Spain expects stable volume, but large calibres

The Spanish sector expects a similar production volume compared to last year; that is, between 45,000 and 50,000 tonnes, although calibres are expected to be larger. The season for the Fuerte is ending with high prices. The Hass harvest will kick off in a few days.



At the moment, traders have avocados from Chile, Mexico and Colombia available. In recent years, Colombia has become a serious player after companies from different countries have invested in cultivation there. The prices are good and stable this year. For the coming weeks, an increasing demand is expected, as the Holidays are getting closer. In the

coming years, the market will continue to grow and avocados should become a commodity, just like apples and oranges. "I have recorded enormous growth in sales to Italy, France and Belgium," says an exporter.

Netherlands: Year-round avocado craze, but December still peak month

Although the avocado craze is there all year round, December is still the peak month for this tropical fruit. In recent months, the market has been recording a fairly stable development and it is expected to continue in this direction in the coming weeks, especially if Chile leaves the market. For the small sizes, prices currently reach around € 13,50 and the larger sizes are sold for up to € 14.50.

While the Chilean avocado season will come to an end in about a month, the

Colombian and Spanish have only just started. The first Peruvian fruit is expected to hit the market at the end of January. This year, there will be an increase in the volume of Colombian avocados shipped to Europe. A not too large harvest is expected in Spain. According to importers, Colombia has also moved forward in terms of quality and has the potential to become an important player on the avocado market.

Germany: November is a calm month

In Germany, the Hass avocado is dominating the entire market. At the moment, this product is coming from mainly Chile, Peru and South Africa. Here and there, there is also some from Mexico and Colombia. Wholesale prices are reasonably stable, fluctuating between EUR 14 and EUR 16 per 4 kg box.

Traders admit that, with regard to demand, November is a calm month compared to September and October. The saturated market has led to prices gradually dropping slightly over the last two weeks.

In Germany, the avocado is gaining popularity across the board. The population's consumption per head has risen over the last two years from 250 to 640 grammes per year. This is still, however, considerably less than its neighbouring countries. In France, consumption is at 1,6 kg per person per year, in the Netherlands and Scandinavia, this amount is even more at about 2 kg. Organic avocados are also seen more often, and are keeping pace with the rising demand.

Belgium: high avocado prices

At the moment, avocado prices in Belgium are quite high. In September, the prices were a fraction lower. At the moment, the price per box stands at around 12-14 Euro. Little seems wrong with the quality of the avocados. Occasionally,

MARKET NEWS

there are some poorer quality Chilean batches, although those volumes are not significant.

At the moment, there is some supply from Spain, Colombia and Mexico. Most avocados come from Chile. A trader reports that the demand and supply around the Holidays should be fairly stable as long as nothing unexpected happens. The prices will therefore remain virtually the same. However, there is a shortage of green skin avocados, as a result of which their prices are slightly higher. Consequently, more Hass avocados are currently being imported to Belgium.

Little demand in Russia

The demand for avocados is currently very low, says an importer. Imports arrive from Kenya and other African countries, but there have been some problems with quality in the past. There are also imports from Israel, which offers better quality, but has a shorter season. At the moment, many Russians are in "survival mode" because of the economic situation in the country, especially now that the winter has started and the mercury is falling rapidly.

Safety Alerts

Date	Brand Name	Product Description	Reason/ Problem	Company
12/22/2017	Nodine's Smokehouse, Inc.	Smoked Salmon 1.5 lbs, 8 oz	Listeria monocytogenes	Nodine's Smokehouse, Inc.
12/22/2017	HT Traders	Mini Biscotti – Triple Chocolate	Undeclared Almonds and Hazelnuts	Harris Teeter

12/21/2017	Springfield Smoked Fish	Smoked products fish	Listeria monocytogenes	Springfield Smoked Fish
12/20/2017	Meijer	Package products containing apple slices	Listeria monocytogenes	Meijer
12/19/2017	Springfield Smoked Fish	Smoked products fish	Listeria monocytogenes	Springfield Smoked Fish
12/19/2017	Spice Time and Spice Supreme	Beef Flavored Bouillon Cube products	Undeclared Soy and Wheat	Gel Spice Company, Inc.
12/19/2017	Apple Ridge	Gala, Honeycrisp and Golden Delicious apples	Listeria monocytogenes	Jack Brown Produce, Inc.
12/13/2017	Marmex Corp	Male Enhancement	Unapproved new drug	Marmex Corp
12/13/2017	Springfield	Pre-sliced Nova Salmon	Listeria monocytogenes	Springfield Smoked Fish
12/08/2017	Bibi Frutix	Bibi Frutix candy	Potential chemical contamination	Harvesters
12/05/2017	HERB-OX	Beef Flavor Granulated Bouillon	Undeclared Milk	Creative Packaging
12/04/2017	Comforts	Comforts FOR BABY Purified Water with Fluoride	Mold (Talaromyces penicillium)	Kroger Company

11/30/2017	Bull, Chao Jimengnan	Dietary Supplement	Unapproved drug with sildenafil	Nutra Labs Inc.
11/29/2017	N/A	Dark Chocolate Almonds, Dark Chocolate Cashews, and Dark Chocolate Pecans	Undeclared Milk	Farrell Farms, Inc.
11/28/2017	Plow & Hearth	Chocolate Covered Cashews	Undeclared Peanut	Virginia Diner, Inc.

Enterprise News

British pea industry could benefit from Brexit

Challenges and opportunities for the Vining Pea industry have been highlighted in a report launched by British Peas and Beans and British Growers at the UK Vining Pea and Bean Industry Conference held in Peterborough.

The 'UK Vining Report 2017' provides a comprehensive review of the way that the industry operates in the UK at present, as well as its future prospects.

The UK market could provide a major opportunity, with nearly 35,000 tonnes of peas imported into the country at present. With rising exchange rates and Brexit potentially making imports more difficult, there is a real opportunity for the UK industry to sell more British peas to British consumers.

Coral Russell of British Peas and Beans, said: "These are exciting and challenging times for the Vining Pea Industry. There is a real opportunity to grow the British

market in the post-Brexit period and we need to grasp it with both hands. There are challenges as well, but I am confident that we can face these with the right support from UK governments."



The report makes it clear that there a number of challenges on the horizon. A general reduction in the number of active ingredients for crop protection could affect the industry. Anderson's 'report on the issue, published in 2014, highlighted the British Pea as a 'high risk' crop.

Specifically, the restrictions on Wakil XL, which protects against downy mildew, could lead to a reduction in yields. Although the product has received a new licence, this restricts the period when Wakil-treated seed can be planted to post-April 1st, when many crops have already been drilled.

The report also highlights the importance of Producer Organisations (POs) to the Vining Pea Industry. There are currently eight British pea growing POs under the current EU scheme. If a similar scheme is not available in the UK after Brexit, it would put UK producers at a serious disadvantage compared to their European counterparts.

Undeclared Milk Causes Several Recalls



The presence of milk, one of the major food allergens, not declared on labels has caused the recall of several products, according to the FDA. No illnesses have been reported in

connection with any of these recalls, according to the notices.

Colorado Nut Company is recalling Cashew Cranberry Cherry Jubilee, Oat Bran Nutty Crunch, Honey Nutty Granola, Peanut Delight, and Frontier Trail Mix because of undeclared milk. These products were distributed from June 1, 2017 through November 7, 2017 with a sell by date range from December 1, 2017 through May 7, 2017.

The states where these products were sold include Arkansas, Arizona, California, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. They were sold at car washes, hospitals, colleges, retail stores, national parks, and liquor stores via UPS, FedEx or direct deliveries.

These products are packaged in 8 ounce bags. The item names and numbers are: Cashew Cranberry Cherry Jubilee with UPC number 018142352161, Oat Bran Nutty Crunch with UPC number 018142352130, Honey Nutty Granola with UPC number 018142352147, Peanut Delight with UPC number 018142352512, and Frontier Trail Mix with UPC number 018142352987 (Frontier Trail Mix is sold on Frontier

Airlines).

Another recall for products containing undeclared milk was issued by Lipari Foods. These foods were packaged by their sister company JLM. They were distributed to retail stores in Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.

The foods were distributed under the Weis and All Natural brand names, or as generic products without branding. If you aren't sure if you bought one, contact your retailer.

You can see the long list of products, along with pack/size, lot code, and UPC number at the FDA web site. The recalled products include Natural Dark Chocolate Cranberries, Dark Chocolate Coffee Beans, Natural Dark Chocolate Raisins, and Dark Chocolate Almond Bark, among others.

If you purchased any of these products and are allergic to milk, don't eat them. Throw them away or take the back to the place of purchase for a full refund.

Maker of Ruth's Salads Warned About Listeria Monocytogenes Contamination by FDA

B&H Foods, the maker of Ruth's Salad, was warned about Listeria monocytogenes contamination in their facility by the FDA in November 2017. B&H Foods recalled Ruth's Pimento Spreads in February of this year for possible Listeria monocytogenes contamination, and expanded that recall later. No illnesses have been reported in connection with the consumption of these products.

The warning letter is long and details many violations of the current Good

Manufacturing Practice regulations for foods. First, during an FDA inspection in May 2017, environmental swabs were taken. Lab analysis found they contained *Listeria monocytogenes* bacteria, which made the products prepared in that facility adulterated.

Two strains of *Listeria* bacteria were found. One was found in the Chester, South Carolina facility in May 2012, August 2013, and April 2015. It was also found in isolates obtained from USDA samples of chicken and ham salad taken from the company's Charlotte, North Carolina facility, and in environmental swabs collected from the North Carolina facility in 2015. That means the pathogenic bacteria has established and maintained a presence and that this *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination may have been occurring for years.

The second strain of *Listeria* bacteria was identical to the pathogen found in a USDA sample of the company's pimento spread, the state of North Carolina's 2017 sample of pimento cheese, and the FDA's environmental swabs taken from the South Carolina facility in May 2012, August 2013, and April 2015. That strain has also maintained a presence in the South Carolina facility from 2012 to 2017. An identical strain was found in the Charlotte, North Carolina processing environment.

This all means that according to the FDA release, "they demonstrate your cleaning and sanitation practices are inadequate to effectively control pathogens in [the] facility to prevent contamination of food. Furthermore, *L. monocytogenes* found in the environment of your facility increases the risk of your finished product becoming contaminated. Once established in a production area, personnel or equipment can facilitate the pathogen's movement and contamination of food-contact surfaces and finished product."

Good Manufacturing Practices violations were numerous. They included sprays and hoses splashing water onto food contact surfaces, including tables while the pimento spread was being made, soiled garments of employees coming into direct contact with raw ingredients and the finished product, and employees storing food contact equipment on towels and tables, then using them to process finished product without first washing them.

Food contact surfaces were not maintained so they could be properly cleaned and sanitized. Two pallets of canned pimentos and one pallet of canned jalapeños were stored in the maintenance shop; the pallet of jalapeños had opened motor oil containers and lubricants on top of it. The front pallet of pimento had a viscous black liquid spilled on the middle cans. And chemical drums were taking onto open boxes of finished product containers.

Finally, employees did not use gloves, did not wash their hands thoroughly, and the hand washing station did not have hand towels. Employees were handling non-food contact equipment, including a trash can, and did not wash their hands. They then performed work including their bare hands touching the interior of finished product containers.

The company has fifteen days to respond to these issues and indicate corrective action.

MARKET NEWS - REPLY

If you have any views or comments on the articles in the marketing news please feel free to contact us on the following email address: sales.china@mxns.com