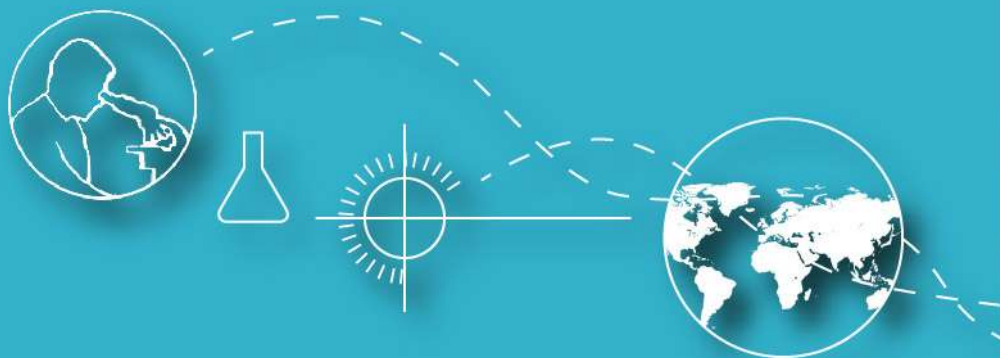


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May 2020

# MARKET NEWS



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## Focus on China

### China launches crackdown on food, medicine, environment crimes

China's Ministry of Public Security has launched a campaign to crack down on crimes related to people's livelihoods, including those on food, medicine, environment and wildlife, according to the ministry on Tuesday.

The ministry called on public security organs across the country to focus on busting dens, arresting gangs and destroying criminal networks, and closely integrate their efforts with the ongoing national campaign against organized and gang-related crimes.

Criminals that disregard the health and lives of the people should be severely punished to resolutely safeguard the people's interests and social stability, it said.

The ministry also reported that since the 2019 version of the campaign, which began on July 25 last year, around 39,000 related cases have been solved.

### Task force to combat fake milk powder

A special task force has been set up to investigate a fake milk powder case in which some babies and children were reported to have contracted rickets after drinking the powder in Chenzhou, Hunan province.

The fake milk powder is actually a protein-type solid drink that can be bought from local pharmacies and some mother and baby shops.

The powder was produced by Hunan Waverock Health Industry Co.

On Wednesday, the State Administration for Market Regulation ordered market

regulation departments in Hunan province to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident.



Qiu Chuanhui, director of the Yongxing county administration for market regulation, said his administration has joined hands with the local health commission, public security and relevant departments to launch a monthlong inspection to investigate and eliminate the production and sale of fake milk powder for infants and children, as well as related food.

"Meanwhile, senior pediatricians have been organized to conduct comprehensive and scientific physical examinations for five of the victims for free and offer their diagnoses and treatment," Qiu told local media firm rednet.cn on Wednesday.

Yongxing county, under the administration of Chenzhou, has had reports of many

victims of fake milk powder in previous weeks.

The fake milk powder was withdrawn from local pharmacies and shops in Yongxing after the case was exposed, Qiu said.

The babies and children who were diagnosed with rickets after drinking the fake milk powder experienced severe weight loss, which gave them the appearance of having large heads, and have suffered from developmental delay and other symptoms, Qiu added.

The Chenzhou city authority promised to investigate the case and punish those responsible, the city authority said on Wednesday.

Meanwhile the city's administration for market regulation and relevant departments arranged for the victims to get physical examinations and will help them seek compensation, the city authority said.

The special task force was set up after many complaints and reports from parents in the previous weeks, the city authority said.

According to a statement released by the Yongxing county government on Wednesday, no hospitals and doctors were found to have been involved in the case so far.

Fearing that their children will have chronic conditions when they grow up, many parents wrote a joint open letter to the Chenzhou mayor, asking for a thorough investigation of the case.

A father surnamed Hu said his 3-year-old child suffers from physical and mental stunting after drinking the milk powder for months.

"The 3-year-old child's intelligence seems the same as a 2-years-old's," he told local media.

Further, a mother surnamed Zhu said her child frequently fell ill with cough and eczema, and many indicators have been determined to be substandard after health checkups.

The fake milk powder is not cheap. Many parents spent more than 3,000 yuan (\$430) a month to buy it, she added.

It is the second case involving fake milk powder in Chenzhou in a year. The city had reported a similar case late last year.

## 2 officials removed over fake infant formula

Two officials from the market regulation department of Yongxing county, Hunan province, were removed from their posts, after an investigation of baby shops that were passing off powdered protein drinks as special infant formula.

A couple who ran a baby shop in Yongxing county of Chenzhou had claimed that the protein drink Beianmin was a formula for special medical purposes. They were investigated on suspicion of false advertising.

Beianmin is a protein powder produced by Tianjin Deheng Science and Technology Co. The products involved have inspection reports issued by the manufacturer and the food quality inspection station of Guangdong province.

The parents of five infants reported that their babies had developed abnormal symptoms after consuming Beianmin drinks. The local government arranged for free medical examinations in Chenzhou hospitals.

According to an assessment by medical experts, the five infants were malnourished, underweight and had insufficient vitamin D3.

Local authorities said they will continue to offer one-on-one care and nutritional guidance to parents and children who had consumed the protein drink.

## International News

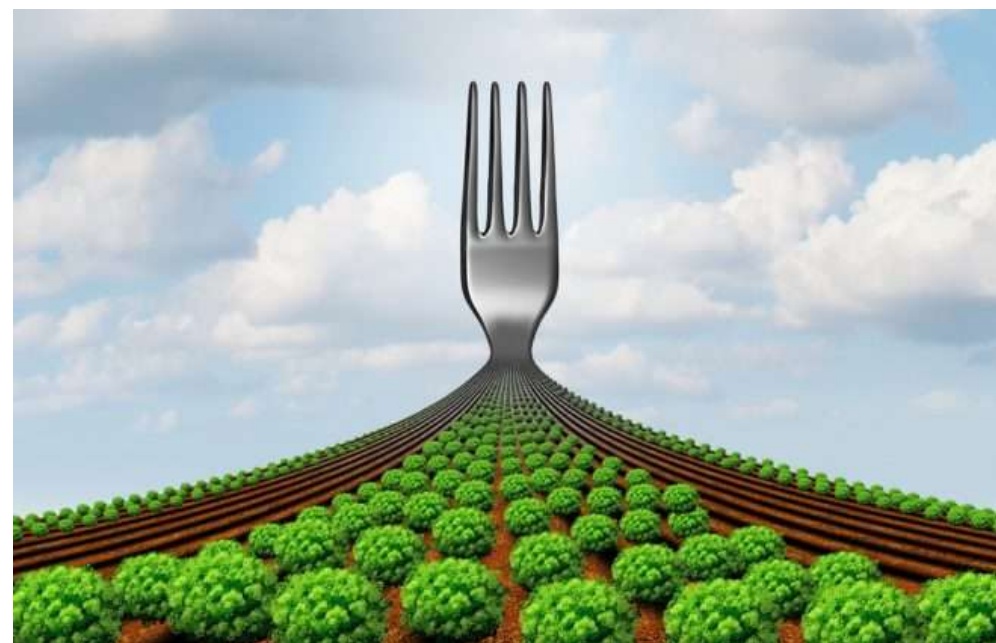
### FDA Extends Application Period for Voluntary Qualified Importer Program to July 31

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will be extending the application period for importers to submit their notice of intent to participate and their completed application for the Voluntary Qualified Importer Program (VQIP) for the Fiscal Year 2021 benefits period. The application portal will remain open until July 31, 2020, after which it will close to allow time for the agency to review applications before the start of the annual benefits period that will begin on October 1, 2020.

The application period is being extended because the FDA understands that current travel restrictions and advisories related to the COVID-19 public health emergency have hindered the ability of accredited Certification Bodies (CBs) to conduct onsite regulatory audits and issue certifications to foreign entities, which are required as part of the VQIP application.

VQIP is a voluntary fee-based program established by the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) that provides expedited review and importation of human and animal foods into the United States for approved applicants who achieve and maintain a high level of control over the safety and security of their supply chains. To participate, importers must meet certain eligibility criteria, which include ensuring that the facilities of their foreign supplier are certified by a CB that has been accredited through the FDA's Accredited Third-Party Certification Program.

### EU plans cut to antimicrobial and pesticide use in Farm to Fork strategy



The European Commission has set targets to reduce pesticide use and sales of antimicrobials by 2030.

The Farm to Fork strategy includes a reduction by 50 percent on the use and risk of pesticides and in sales of antimicrobials used for farmed animals and aquaculture products. Plans still need to be approved by the European Parliament and Council.

Plans call for action on food fraud to be scaled up to achieve a level playing field for operators. Measures that can be taken by control and enforcement authorities will be boosted.

The Commission will assess the resilience of the food system and develop a

contingency plan for ensuring food supply and security in a crisis. The plan should set up food crisis response ability coordinated by the Commission and involving member states. It could include the food safety sector depending on the incident.

The agency plans to propose mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling and develop a labelling framework that covers the nutritional, climate, environmental and social aspects of products. Extending mandatory origin or provenance indications to certain products is being looked at. There are also plans by 2023 for legally binding targets to reduce food waste across the EU.

“The Farm to Fork Strategy will make a positive difference across the board in how we produce, buy and consume our food that will benefit the health of our citizens, societies and the environment,” said Stella Kyriakides, commissioner for health and food safety. “It offers the opportunity to reconcile our food systems with our planet’s health, to ensure food security and meet the aspirations of Europeans for healthy, equitable and eco-friendly food.”

#### Need to support farmers and animal welfare

Pascal Canfin, chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, said the objectives need to be transformed into EU legislation.

“The two new strategies presented contain important new commitments such as tripling the rate of conversion to organic farming to reach 25 percent of organic farming products on the EU market by 2030, a 50 percent reduction in the use and risks of pesticides, a strengthening of food safety at our borders and a target to protect 30 percent of both sea and land as natural areas,” Canfin said.

Norbert Lins, chair of the parliament’s Agriculture Committee, said the strategy

must give farmers the support they need.

“The Farm to Fork strategy can only be successful if there is a balance between the farm and the fork,” Lins said. “The conspicuous absence of the Agriculture Commissioner (Janusz Wojciechowski) at [the] Commission press conference does not give us much hope that the strategy aims for such a balance. We need to give our farmers the respect and support they deserve for filling our tables every single day and not to overburden them with disproportionate requirements.”

Anja Hazekamp, a member of the GUE/NGL political group, will be responsible for drafting the European Parliament’s response to the proposal.

“We have been pushing for stricter rules on animal welfare during transport for years. It is a breakthrough that the European Commission intends to amend these rules. The EU transports over 1.5 billion animals annually, often under appalling conditions,” she said.

“Transport of live animals to countries outside the EU must end and maximum transport times for all animal transports must be drastically reduced. The frequent abuses in slaughterhouses need also be addressed. There must be ambitious and binding targets to reduce the use of toxins in agriculture, and the most dangerous substances must be banned immediately to protect people, animals and the environment.”

#### Risk to livelihood

Irish Farmers Association President Tim Cullinan warned the strategy could put farmers out of business.

“It is not credible for the EU to drive up production costs for European farmers

while at the same time looking for low food prices. They want food produced to organic standards, but available at conventional prices,” Cullinan said. “It is likely that farmers will end up paying through higher costs and low prices while retailers will continue to make billions,” he said.

“The EU wants ever-increasing standards imposed on European farmers, but will do trade deals to import food from other countries which have much lower standards and do not meet EU rules. These EU strategies could be counterproductive as they will drive European farmers out of business, leaving the EU dependent on these imports and threatening food security.”

Slow Food, a group that defends small-scale traditional food producers, said it regretted the decision to include genetically modified organisms (GMO) in the Farm to Fork strategy.

“We need a long-term approach to transition towards a truly sustainable and resilient food system that respects the wellbeing of farmers, farmworkers, consumers and the environment. Overall, the targets and actions are ambitious and send a strong signal on the objectives to be achieved, involving all actors in the food system,” said Marta Messa, director of the Slow Food Europe office.

Promotion of a new wave of GMOs and inadequate pesticide reduction targets undermine the strategy, according to Friends of the Earth Europe.

Mute Schimpf, food and farming campaigner for the group, said industrial agriculture is causing ecological collapse – and it’s made possible by pesticide use, weak GMO safety laws and factory farms being politically acceptable.

“The Farm to Fork Strategy leaves the door open for weakening GMO safety laws, remains dangerously weak on pesticides and industrial animal agriculture,” Schimpf said.

A positive step

Sascha Marschang, acting secretary general at the European Public Health Alliance, said a constructive, structured and action-oriented debate should take-off on the future of food. The health community must strengthen its voice to ensure this process delivers a true transformation for the benefit of people and planet she said.

Mella Frewen, FoodDrinkEurope director general, said it is a positive step toward a common EU food policy.

“However, we would like more assurance from the Commission that the strategy will include a structured dialogue with stakeholders and systematic impact assessments to ensure that food security, food safety, economic recovery and sustainability are not compromised.

“The food and drink industry is a major buyer of raw materials, including 70 percent of all EU farm produce. We welcome the Commission’s intention to develop a contingency plan to ensure food supply and food security in times of crisis.”

Monique Goyens, the European Consumer Organization’s (BEUC) director general, said the plan shows the EU is on the right track.

“Better information on food origin and sustainability is also good news as consumers are hungry to know more about what is on their plates,” she said.

“However, relying on individual consumer choice alone will not be enough to change food habits if the healthy and sustainable option is insufficiently available or the most expensive one.”

## EU countries take up interim rules on official controls during pandemic



More than a dozen countries have taken advantage of temporary rules to tackle disruption in official control systems in Europe because of the coronavirus pandemic.

As of May 6, 15 nations had informed the European Commission that they are applying the measures in Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/466. Countries wishing to use them have to tell the Commission and other member states.

The full list of countries is Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, France, Italy, Cyprus, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden.

The aim is to prevent spread of the COVID-19 virus through movement of control staff and to help movement of animals, plants, food and feed into and within

Europe.

The EU legislation on human, animal and plant health and animal welfare gives nations more flexibility to do official controls in the supply chain. Member states had told the Commission that restrictions on movement of people was making it hard to conduct official controls which require the physical presence of staff and other activities in line with legislation.

It covers clinical examination of animals, certain checks on products of animal origin, plant products and food and feed of non-animal origin, and testing of samples in official laboratories designated by member states. Veterinary and phytosanitary controls on animals, plants, food and feed may be carried out by people authorized by national authorities.

The rules give temporary flexibility for control authorities to use remote communication and electronically submitted documents for checks. It is initially limited to June 1 and will be reviewed based on experience.

Consumer group Foodwatch previously wrote to Stella Kyriakides, the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, expressing concern that the crisis must not be used to lower frequency and quality of control requirements and food checks must not be delegated to private companies.

### EU ups checks on citrus and spice mixes

Meanwhile, the European Commission has also updated the list of foods subject to enforced entry controls from certain countries.

Consignments of oranges, mandarins, clementines, wilkings and similar citrus hybrids from Turkey, are subject to an increased level of official controls because of potential pesticide contamination, as are spice mixes from Pakistan due to



possible aflatoxin contamination.

The frequency of identity and physical checks on beans from Kenya and dried grapes and pomegranates from Turkey are also being increased because of non-compliance.

Sesame seeds from Sudan and Uganda were already subject to increased official controls for Salmonella since July and January 2017, respectively. Now all consignments of sesame seeds from these countries need to be accompanied by an official certificate stating all results of sampling and analysis show absence of Salmonella in 25 grams.

All imports of peppers, other than sweet, from India and Pakistan also must be accompanied by an official certificate showing the products have been sampled and analyzed for pesticide residues and results show the relevant maximum residue levels have not been exceeded.

For raspberries from Serbia, dried apricots and apricots, otherwise prepared or preserved and lemons from Turkey, information indicates a satisfactory degree of compliance with safety requirements so the increased level of official controls is no longer justified.

Previous legislation prohibits import of foodstuffs containing betel leaves originating in or sent from Bangladesh. It was adopted following a high number of reports because of the presence of a range of Salmonella strains, including Typhimurium. As Bangladesh has not submitted a satisfactory action plan, these rules remain in place.

### Updated — Executive Order to meat Industry: No more closures



President Donald J. Trump has by Executive Order placed the American meat industry under the Defense Production Act to prevent meat shortages by keeping meat processing plants open.

The Defense Production Act or DPA was passed by Congress in 1950 and signed into law by President Harry Truman. Under the DPA, the president is empowered to direct private companies to act in the national interest during times of war, national emergency, or after terrorist attacks. President Trump previously used the DPA to increase the production of health care supplies.

Meat slaughter and processing plants are being declared “critical infrastructure” for the duration of the coronavirus outbreak to prevent any further disruptions or shortages in the food supply

Top companies in the meat and poultry industries since early April have used

temporary closures when COVID-19 was cutting into staffing levels.

Closures and production reductions cut pork capacities by as much as 25 percent and beef production by as much as 10 percent.

Port producers and cattlemen on America's farms and ranches have been hammered by this loss of production as markets for animals "on the hoof" plunged.

John Tyson said in company advertising this past weekend that the supply chain is broken. After predictions that 80 percent of meat production could eventually be shut down, Trump acted.

The Executive Order follows the release of joint guidance for meat plants that was issued earlier this week by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

By enacting the DPA, the meatpacking and processing facilities should be able to receive more tests and protective gear as they remain open. Trump was urged to take the action by Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and Iowa Sens. Joni Ernst and "Chuck" Grassley.

The meat, fresh produce, and dairy industries were turned upside down when restaurants and institutions like schools were shut down over the virus scares.

Farm state officials are also asking for federal reimbursement to hog farmers who say they are being forced to euthanizing pigs because they've lost viable markets.

Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue released the following statement after President Trump signed the Executive Order to keep meat and poultry

processing facilities open during the COVID-19 national emergency.

"I thank President Trump for signing this executive order and recognizing the importance of keeping our food supply chain safe, secure, and plentiful. Our nation's meat and poultry processing facilities play an integral role in the continuity of our food supply chain," said Perdue.

"Maintaining the health and safety of these heroic employees in order to ensure that these critical facilities can continue operating is paramount. I also want to thank the companies who are doing their best to keep their workforce safe as well as keeping our food supply sustained. USDA will continue to work with its partners across the federal government to ensure employee safety to maintain this essential industry.

Under the Executive Order and the authority of the Defense Production Act, USDA will work with meat processing to affirm they will operate in accordance with the CDC and OSHA guidelines and then work with state and local officials to ensure that these plants are allowed to operate to produce the meat protein that Americans need.

USDA will continue to work with the CDC, OSHA, FDA, and state and local health department officials to ensure that facilities implementing this guidance to keep employees safe can continue operating.

### **Large E. coli increase recorded for Europe in 2018**

The Shiga toxin-producing E. coli infection rate in Europe jumped by 40 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year, based on data from ECDC's annual surveillance report.

After a stable period from 2014 to 2017, the rate increased by 41 percent in 2018.

This made STEC the third most common zoonosis in Europe after *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*.

A contributing factor may be the shift from culture to culture-independent diagnostic methods, with PCR more commonly used to diagnose cases, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

STEC infection is mainly acquired through eating contaminated food and contact with animals and/or their feces. Adequate cooking of food, particularly beef, and use of pasteurized milk may reduce the risk of foodborne infections, added the agency.



Most infections in Germany and UK

Thirty countries reported 8,811 cases, of which 8,658 were confirmed Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) infections. The top country notification rates were in Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Malta and Denmark.

Most infections were reported by Germany and the U.K., which together accounted for 47 percent of all cases. The former had 2,226 infections while the latter recorded 1,840. Bulgaria, Cyprus and Lithuania all reported no infections.

A total of 36 percent of 3,536 STEC patients were hospitalized and eleven people died. More than 80 percent of 6,546 STEC cases with information on country of infection were domestically acquired.

The five most common serogroups were O157, O26, O103, O91 and O145. As in previous years, O157 was the most common serogroup in 2018 and accounted for most of the increase. Like in 2016, O26 was a more common cause of hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) than O157.

Notification of STEC infections is mandatory in most countries except four member states. It is voluntary in France and Luxembourg and based on another system in Italy and the United Kingdom. Surveillance systems for STEC infections have national coverage in all EU countries except for France, Italy and Spain.

In France and Italy, surveillance only covers cases of HUS, which mainly affects small children and is characterized by acute kidney failure requiring hospital care. In 2018, the average proportion of hospitalized STEC cases was at 36 percent. The highest proportions of hospitalizations were in countries only reporting HUS cases and having the lowest numbers of cases and notification rates, indicating that their surveillance systems focus only on the most severe cases.

Children mostly affected

Among the 8,257 confirmed STEC cases for which gender was reported, 46 percent were males and 54 percent females.

The highest rate of confirmed cases was in the age group 0 to 4 years. This

group accounted for 2,274, or more than a quarter, of the patients for whom information on age was available. An even larger proportion of children was seen among the HUS cases, where two-thirds were reported in 0 to 4 year-olds. The notification rate decreased with age and was lowest in the 45 to 64 year olds.

Eight urgent inquiries on STEC infection were launched through the Epidemic Intelligence Information System for foodborne and waterborne diseases and zoonoses (EPIS-FWD) but no multi-country outbreaks were detected or investigated.

In 2018, 48 STEC outbreaks were reported to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), involving 381 cases in 10 countries. Five of the 43 strong-evidence foodborne outbreaks had a known vehicle: two were caused by cheese and one each by milk, red meat, and vegetables.

### **From meat to fruits and vegetables, the fight to prevent food shortages moves on**

The federal government this week signaled its willingness to take over any part of the food industry that isn't functioning properly to keep production flowing.

For the moment, the extended authority is being provided to "FDA-regulated food facilities, including fruit and vegetable processing."

USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Mindy Brashears and FDA Commissioner for Food Policy and Response Frank Yiannas said it was "the next step in carrying out Executive Order 13917."

That's the Executive Order President Trump signed in April to grant the USDA authority under the Defense Production Act (DPA) to keep meat and poultry

plants open. Coronavirus illnesses and deaths were forcing temporary shut-downs and production cuts, raising the prospect of meat shortages.



A backlog of slaughter demand remains, but production is trending back up under USDA's Defense Act authority. Since the national emergency was declared March 13 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Act has also been used to produce masks, protective equipment, and medical ventilators.

Jennifer McEntire, vice president for food safety and technology for the United Fresh Produce Association says USDA-FDA collaboration is "a good thing," but also said the industry hopes the DPA authority never has to be deployed.

In a joint statement, Brashears and Yiannas said the action is "another in a series of proactive steps the USDA and FDA have taken to maximize food availability following unprecedented disruptions the COVID-19 pandemic has caused to food supply chains that have been established and refined for decades."

They said the USDA-FDA agreement is “important preparedness” for the approaching peak harvest seasons. Some fruits and vegetables are grown to be frozen or canned. The agreement keeps the DPA available throughout those processes no matter whether USDA or the FDA has regulatory authority.

The USDA/FDA statement makes it clear that the agreement will be used if COVID-19 illnesses among packing house employees or harvest crews threaten a reduction in production capacity. The DPA can be used as trump card if state or local closures threaten to dispute harvest or “the continued functioning of the national food supply chain, undermining critical infrastructure during the national emergency.”

The joint statement said USDA and FDA will work with state and local regulators “in a collaborative manner,” but promised to take action under the DPA “as needed, to ensure the continuity of our food supply.”

Under the Executive Order signed on April 28, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue was granted authority to use the DPA if needed to fulfill contracts at food processing facilities.

“The MOU (memorandum of understanding) makes clear that FDA will work with stakeholders to monitor the food supply for food resources not under the USDA’s exclusive jurisdiction in order to prevent interruptions at FDA-regulated food facilities.,” according to the joint statement.

Throughout the pandemic, USDA and FDA say they’ve worked with industry and federal partners to protect frontline employees with such needs as personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks, disinfectants, and sanitation supplies. The federal agencies are also monitoring the food supply for any signs of shortages.

Brashears and Yiannas are the top food safety officials in the federal government. In the statement, they said again that foodborne exposure is not known to be a route of transmission for SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, also known as coronavirus. They said their agencies along with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are ready to respond to any foodborne outbreaks that may occur during the pandemic.

### Finland assesses heavy metals risk from foods



Some adults in Finland are exposed to amounts of heavy metals in food that could pose a risk to their health, according to an assessment.

The Finnish Food Authority (Ruokavirasto) studied the exposure of working-age and elderly people to cadmium, lead, arsenic, mercury, nickel and aluminum via

food and drinking water.

The magnitude of lead and inorganic arsenic intake was such that health hazards could not be ruled out, but their probability is low or at most moderate. Non-alcoholic drinks including rice-based drinks, cereals (including rice) as well as fish and seafood were the top sources for inorganic arsenic exposure.

Lead concentrations in food have also decreased during the past few decades, according to the report. Cereals, vegetables, fruit and berries and non-alcoholic drinks are the main sources. These groups are also the main foods for aluminum as a contaminant.

Food eaten a lot and in big quantities

The main sources of heavy metals for average consumers are food categories that are consumed often and in large doses, such as bread, different beverages including coffee, fish and shellfish.

“For example, oil seeds such as sunflower seeds may be a significant source of cadmium and nickel for consumers who consume a lot of them, and the concentrations of different heavy metals in food supplements may be considerable,” said Johanna Suomi, senior researcher in the Risk Assessment Unit of the Finnish Food Authority.

Exposure estimates were made based on food consumption information from the FinDiet studies in 2007 and 2012 as well as monitoring data of the authorities, previous research projects, and the concentration database compiled based on own-check results from industry.

One in five women over the age of 45 have an elevated risk of osteoporotic fracture due to cadmium exposure. For 6 percent the risk is more than three

times higher than for those with less exposure. The greatest dietary exposure to heavy metals was faced by women of fertile age (from 25 to 45 years old) but the mercury exposure of this group was low.

“Finnish women of 25 to 45 years of age get more heavy metals from their food than women who have passed the fertile age. Because heavy metals can be transferred to the fetus through the placenta, exposure during and partially before pregnancy may affect the development of the future child. Many of these harmful substances damage the developing central nervous system, among other things,” said Suomi.

Heavy metal exposure except methylmercury drops with age

Exposure to methylmercury, found in fish and other seafood, was highest for those over 65 years old, because according to FinDiet 2007 and 2012 data, they ate more fish more often than younger people.

The exposure to mercury was low for most of the population, however the tolerable weekly intake of methylmercury was exceeded by roughly 1.5 percent of 25 to 64-year-olds and 3 percent of 65 to 74-year-olds. For everyone studied, the intake of inorganic mercury was under the maximum tolerable weekly intake, which means the risk is insignificant.

For less than one per cent of the Finnish adult population, cadmium exposure exceeds the maximum tolerable weekly intake defined by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Exceeding this maximum value may lead to kidney damage.

Cadmium exposure comes mainly from plant-based foods like cereals, vegetables and potatoes, since they are consumed often but concentrations are mostly not high.

# MARKET NEWS

For some people, the nickel exposure through food is so high that those with a nickel allergy may also get skin symptoms due to food-based exposure.

Aluminum, which is found in food as a contaminant, remains under the maximum tolerable weekly intake for all groups studied.

## Safety Alerts

Date	Brand Name(s)	Product Description	Product Type	Recall Reason Description	Company Name
05/21/2020	Radhuni	Curry Powder	Food & Beverages, Spices, Flavors & Salts, Foodborne Illness	Salmonella	New Hoque and Sons, Inc.
05/15/2020	Wegmans	Semi-Sweet Chocolate nonpareils	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared Milk	MELLACE FAMILY BRANDS CALIFORNIA INC.
05/14/2020	Peekaboo	Mint Chocolate Chip with Hidden Spinach Ice Cream	Food & Beverages, Ice Cream/Frozen Dairy, Foodborne Illness	Potential to be contaminated with Listeria monocytogenes	Ramar Foods

05/11/2020	Wild Harvest	Organic Fresh Basil	Food & Beverages, Vegetable Products	Contaminated by Cyclospora cayetanensis	United Natural Foods, Inc.
05/08/2020	Plucker's World Famous Wing Sauce	Bottled Wing Sauces	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared Allergens (Milk, Soy, and/or Wheat)	Zilk's Plus Resources, LLC
05/05/2020	The Essential Baking Company	Sliced Columbia Bread	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared Egg	The Essential Baking Company
05/04/2020	OPTAVIA	Essential Old Fashioned Maple & Brown Sugar Oatmeal	Food & Beverages, Allergens	Undeclared Milk	Medifast, Inc.
05/01/2020	Nabisco	Ritz crackers	Food & Beverages,	Undeclared peanut	Mondelez Global LLC
04/29/2020	Condies Foods	Chicken salad sandwiches	Food & Beverages, Allergens	Undeclared soy	Condies Foods
04/28/2020	Benefiber	Prebiotic Fiber Supplement	Food & Beverages,	Potential for plastic pieces or shavings	GSK Consumer Healthcare

## Enterprise News

### BVL calls on industry to step up controls on spices



The Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) in Germany has called on manufacturers and importers to increase checks to ensure the safety of spices.

Industry is responsible for the quality and compliance of spices with maximum residue levels. The agency told those involved in the sector, particularly paprika and chili powder players, to strengthen their controls so that goods failing to meet legal requirements are not placed on the market.

Because of production, processing and storage methods, spices such as chili powder, pepper or paprika sometimes contain mycotoxins, residues of pesticides or heavy metals. However, as spices are only used in small quantities, there is generally no immediate health risk for consumers, according to the BVL.

Investigations by federal states have repeatedly tested samples in previous years where the legal maximum levels were exceeded.

#### Mycotoxin findings

In 2018, 144 samples of paprika powder were tested for aflatoxin and Ochratoxin A in nationwide monitoring. Compared to a similar study in 2012, aflatoxin levels were slightly lower. Ochratoxin A in paprika powder was significantly higher in 2018 than for the other products examined.

In 2017, there were also studies on mycotoxin in spices. In the investigation of black pepper as well as chili and paprika spices, the levels measured were overall at low levels.

Findings show the level of mycotoxins in food can fluctuate from year to year because of weather conditions. Spices can also become moldy in the home if stored incorrectly, according to the BVL.

In 2018 and 2019, there were 16 and 13 alerts of mycotoxins in paprika and chili powder in the European Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). This corresponds to 41 percent of all reports on mycotoxins in herbs and spices in 2019.

The European Commission and member states monitor these notifications and if there are continued issues then increased checks can be placed on a product coming from outside the EU. In a recent update to foods subject to enforced entry controls from certain countries, consignments of spice mixes from Pakistan were added to the list due to possible aflatoxin contamination.

#### Heavy metals and pesticide residues

Paprika powder was examined in 2018 monitoring for heavy metals. In



comparison to other investigated foods, there was a higher exposure to lead, copper, chromium and aluminum. However, the maximum level for copper of 40 milligrams per kilogram was not exceeded in any samples tested.

Comparatively high levels of lead, aluminum, nickel, chromium and thallium were also found for black pepper during 2017 monitoring. Chemical elements such as heavy metals can get into food through air, water and soil.

BVL advised manufacturers to check whether the metal content in spices can be reduced by using different processing techniques.

Investigations by federal states have also often found pesticide residues in spices. In 2017, residues of several active substances were found in 70 percent of 23 chili powder samples. Almost a quarter exceeded the maximum residue limits.

A total of 13 percent of 54 paprika powder samples also had residues above the limit. In comparison, in 2018 only 2.9 percent of 137 samples of paprika powder exceeded the maximum residue levels.

A possible reason for exceeding the maximum residue levels for dried chili and paprika powder is a concentration of residues during the drying stage of the fresh products treated with pesticides, according to the BVL.

### **EFSA: Ochratoxin A in food likely poses health risk; licorice cited**

Ochratoxin A in food poses a health concern for most consumer groups, according to a European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) assessment.

Ochratoxin A (OTA) is a mycotoxin naturally produced by molds that can be found in foodss such as cereals, preserved meats, fresh and dried fruit, and cheese.



Data available since an opinion in 2006 suggest that OTA can be genotoxic by directly damaging the DNA and experts confirmed it can be carcinogenic to the kidney. OTA causes kidney toxicity in different animal species and kidney tumors in rodents.

The European Commission asked EFSA to update the 2006 opinion. In that work, a tolerable weekly intake (TWI) based on toxicity and carcinogenicity to the kidney of 120 nanograms per kilogram (ng/kg) of body weight was established.

#### Existing regulation and scale of issue

Experts said the overall uncertainty associated with the assessment is high and it is more likely to overestimate than underestimate the risk.

Maximum levels for Ochratoxin A are in place at EU level for unprocessed cereals, dried vine fruits such as currants, raisins and sultanas, green coffee, roasted coffee beans, ground roasted coffee, soluble coffee, wine, and grape juice. They range from 0.5 to 10 micrograms per kilogram.

OTA is rapidly absorbed and distributed but slowly eliminated and excreted leading to potential accumulation in the body.

More than 70,000 measurements of concentrations of OTA in food submitted within the past 10 years by 29 EU countries and the European Vegetable Oil and Protein meal Industry (FEDIOL) were used for assessing dietary exposures. More than half of the data came from Germany and the Netherlands. The highest mean concentrations of OTA were in the categories plant extract formula, flavorings or essences — both containing licorice extracts — and chili pepper.

According to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) portal, between January 2016 and June 2019, 25 of 87 reports of OTA were on cereal - based products. OTA also occurs frequently in capsicum powder. In the EU, in 2017 and 2018, 41 cases of pepper contamination were reported by the RASFF.

#### Mitigation measures

Sorting and other cleaning procedures are effective in decreasing OTA content in commodities such as nuts, cocoa and coffee beans, according to officials. Controlled environmental conditions, mainly humidity and temperature, may avoid fungal growth during storage. High temperatures, achieved during the roasting process, were shown to considerably decrease the mycotoxin.

For calculating chronic dietary exposure to OTA, food consumption and body weight data were accessed. The most important contributors were preserved meat, cheese and grains and grain - based products. Non - chocolate confectionary was a significant source of exposure in countries where licorice - based sweets are common such as Finland, Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark.

The estimation of chronic dietary exposure resulted in mean and 95th percentile levels ranging from 0.6 to 17.8 and from 2.4 to 51.7 ng/kg body weight per day, respectively.

Experts calculated a margin of exposure (MOE). This tool is used by risk

assessors to consider possible safety concerns from presence in food of substances which are genotoxic and carcinogenic. The work resulted in MOEs of more than 200 in most consumer groups, indicating a low health concern with exception of MOEs for high consumers in younger age groups, showing a possible health concern.

#### Dutch firms found liable in fipronil scandal



A Dutch court has found two companies liable in a 2017 fipronil egg scandal.

Chickfriend and Chickclean failed to fulfill agreements with poultry farmers in 2016 and 2017 for red mite control in chickens. In this period, about 250 poultry farmers, or 20 percent of such farms in the Netherlands, had cleaning done with Dega-16 by Chickfriend or Chickclean.

Based on evidence, the court assumed the owners knew that the Dega-16 product contained fipronil and that its use to control red mites is prohibited.

Dega-16 was presented to customers as an agent consisting of eucalyptus oil and menthol (essential oils).

#### Issue prompted huge egg recall

Fipronil is authorized to be used as a veterinary medicine to combat fleas, mites and ticks in dogs and cats but forbidden for use in animals intended for the food chain, such as chickens.

The detection of fipronil residues in July 2017 led to millions of eggs being withdrawn from across the European Union. Hong Kong, Lebanon, Liberia, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia and South Africa also received contaminated egg products. Contamination was caused by illegal use of non-approved veterinary medicinal products in poultry farms.

A total 26 EU countries reported the presence of fipronil in eggs and egg products, with more than 45 nations affected worldwide, including the United States, Israel and Canada.

The incident resulted in the most intensive exchange of information in the history of the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) portal with more than 700 follow-up notifications to the original notice transmitted in 2017.

#### Claims against NVWA and Belgian supplier

Because of contamination with fipronil, poultry farmers in Europe had to close, eggs were withdrawn from the market and chickens were culled. The court found it was “unlikely” that the stables, chickens, manure and eggs were contaminated with fipronil for any other reason.

A total of 120 poultry farmers claimed damages from Chickfriend and Chickclean and owners of the companies.

According to the companies, the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) did not sufficiently supervise the ban on the use of fipronil. However, this claim was dismissed by the court.

A claim by Chickfriend and Chickclean for damages against the Belgian supplier of Dega-16 was also dismissed. The companies said the supplier added fipronil to Dega-16 without their knowledge. But it was established that this was done at the request of Chickfriend and Chickclean, according to the court.

The amount of compensation per poultry farmer will be determined at a later date in a separate procedure at the court.

#### Researchers find arsenic in rice risk for UK infants



Scientists have found half of rice varieties they tested exceeded maximum arsenic limits for young children in the United Kingdom.

A team at the University of Sheffield's Institute for Sustainable Food found 28 of 55 rice samples sold in the U.K. contained levels of arsenic that exceeded European Commission regulations for rice for infants or children under the age of five.

The U.K. follows European Commission regulations so that inorganic arsenic concentrations must be below 0.20 milligram per kilogram in white (polished) rice and less than 0.25 mg per kg in brown (unpolished) rice. However, the concentration in rice used for infant food production or direct consumption is set at a maximum of 0.1 mg per kg.

#### Potential risk for infants

Results showed brown rice had higher levels of inorganic arsenic than white or wild rice because it contains the bran – the outer layer of the grain. Organically grown rice contained significantly higher levels than non-organically grown rice. White rice was found to have the lowest levels of arsenic.

Researchers concluded that babies under the age of one must be restricted to a maximum of 20 grams per day of the 28 rice varieties that breached regulations to avoid risks of developing cancer in later life. Suppliers were anonymized so it is not clear which brands were involved.

Previous studies have found up to 90 percent of households in the U.K. buy rice with the average person consuming about 100 grams per week.

The study, published in the journal *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety*, showed health risks due to rice arsenic consumption are confined mainly to infants in the U.K. Rice and rice-based products are used for weaning and as baby food, because of nutritional benefits and relatively low allergic potential.

Some adverse effects reported to be associated with long term ingestion of inorganic arsenic are skin lesions, cancer, developmental toxicity, neurotoxicity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.

“Brown and wild rice are healthy foods full of fiber and vitamins, and there is no need for grown-ups to avoid them – but it is concerning to see so many varieties sold in the U.K. breaching food safety regulations,” said Manoj Menon, environmental soil scientist in the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield and lead author of the study.

“Rice products are often considered a safe option for babies and young children, but our research suggests that for more than half of the rice we sampled, infants should be limited to just 20 grams per day to avoid risks associated with arsenic. The government and the European Commission must introduce labelling to warn people of arsenic levels in rice to enable families to make informed food choices.”

#### Arsenic concentrations in rice

Fifty-five different rice types were purchased from various retailers and online suppliers in the U.K. from August to September 2018. Six were wild rice, 36 were white rice, 13 were brown or unpolished, 16 were organic rice and 39 packs were non-organic. Out of these samples, 20 did not contain specific information on country of origin.

Total arsenic in the 55 rice samples analyzed ranged from 0.01 to 0.37 mg per kg with an average of 0.15 mg per kg. A total of 42 rice samples with total arsenic above 0.1 mg per kg were selected for arsenic speciation.

The concentrations of inorganic arsenic and organic arsenic in the 42 rice types analyzed ranged from 0.065 to 0.286 and 0.009 to 0.203 mg per kg, respectively.

The average inorganic arsenic concentration of the 28 samples above the limit was 0.152 mg per kg.

Researchers considered three scenarios for the health risk assessment of rice arsenic. The first was based on the reported per capita consumption rate of rice in the U.K. and the mean inorganic arsenic concentration of the 42 rice samples examined.

In the second and third scenarios, they calculated the maximum permissible per capita consumption rates of rice for three age groups to avoid health risks. To avoid carcinogenic risks for men, women and infants, the scenarios showed a weekly maximum consumption rate of 0.301, 0.252 and 0.0322 kilograms for these three groups, respectively.

Scientists called for labelling to warn the public about levels of arsenic in rice.

“We recommend that consumers could be better informed whether rice and rice products are suitable for infants and young children up to 5 years in the product description labels.”

### Salmonella prompts recall of more than half a million eggs

A number of supermarkets in France have recalled eggs sold under different brand names due to possible Salmonella contamination.

According to the French magazine 60 Millions de Consommateurs the recall covers more than 500,000 eggs but there have been no official communications from authorities and no reported illnesses.

Carrefour has issued three recalls. The first involved the company Arradoy and the other two the firm Matines.



The Arradoy recall was for packages of 20 large standard eggs with dates on the boxes of April 27 to May 18. The implicated eggs are marked with lot number 3FRMDB678 and lot 06 on the box.

The Matines recalls involve packs of 10 and 30 medium sized shell eggs with recommended use-by dates from April 26 to May 14. The code on the eggs is 3FRMDB08 and FR 32 066 020 is on the boxes.

All the affected egg lots have been removed from sale but some of them were marketed before the withdrawal measure, according to the Carrefour recall notice.

Another retailer, Systeme U, also made three egg recalls from Matines. Boxes of six, 10 and 12 with the same code on the eggs and dates as listed above from Carrefour are affected. The recall notice advised consumers who have eggs with the code 3FRMDB08 stamped on the shell to not consume them and to either

destroy them or get a refund.

The supermarket, Auchan, issued one recall for shell eggs from Matines in boxes of six, 10 and 12 and trays of 20 with the same dates and codes as above.

Netto also recalled eggs of the same sizes and with the above dates and codes under the makes of Matines, Netto and with no branding for the same reason.

About Salmonella infections

Food contaminated with Salmonella bacteria does not usually look, smell, or taste spoiled. Anyone can become sick with a Salmonella infection. Infants, children, seniors, and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk of serious illness because their immune systems are fragile, according to the CDC.

Anyone who has eaten any of the recalled eggs and developed symptoms of Salmonella infection should seek medical attention. Sick people should tell their doctors about the possible exposure to Salmonella bacteria because special tests are necessary to diagnose salmonellosis. Salmonella infection symptoms can mimic other illnesses, frequently leading to misdiagnosis.

Symptoms of Salmonella infection can include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and fever within 12 to 72 hours after eating contaminated food. Otherwise, healthy adults are usually sick for four to seven days. In some cases, however, diarrhea may be so severe that patients require hospitalization.

Older adults, children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems, such as cancer patients, are more likely to develop a severe illness and serious, sometimes life-threatening conditions.

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