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MARKET NEWS



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Focus on China

China focuses on geographical indication protection

As a significant part of intellectual property, geographical indications (GIs) have drawn more attention from the Chinese government and enterprises.

China approved 2,391 GI products by the end of 2020, and granted more than 9,400 enterprises permission to use the protected products of the national geographical trademark, said Zhang Zhicheng, head of the protection department of the National Intellectual Property Administration at a press conference on Friday.

A GI is a sign to show a product has a specific geographical origin and possesses qualities or a reputation due to that origin. It is a quality guarantee, which distinguishes it from its competitors.

Benefits of GIs include standardized processes, increased production, and more employment for locals.

More than 1,000 new Chinese enterprises got approval to use GI products last year alone, a 195 percent increase over the same period of the previous year. The output value of enterprises using GIs totaled 639.8 billion yuan in 2020, Zhang noted.

Apart from enterprises, Chinese farmers also harvest benefits of GI products. Since last year, the administration has invested more than 10 million yuan in 43 poverty-stricken counties in 17 provinces in the nation's central and western regions to cultivate 21 GI project developments.

One example is Sangzhi White Tea, which was listed as a GI product in 2019. Since 1994, the administration has dispatched a group of officials to Sangzhi county, Central China's

Hunan province, to assist local poverty alleviation efforts.

The white tea industry in the county has developed quickly since it acquired the GI label. More factories and farmers are now involved in tea production and marketing. About 35,000 people working in the county's tea industry shook off poverty, local officials said.

GIs have become one of the focuses of cooperation in international intellectual property. A China-European Union bilateral agreement on GIs came into force on Jan 1, which protects 100 European GIs in China and 100 Chinese GIs in the EU. Consumers of both markets will likely discover genuine Chinese and EU specialties.

Shanghai unveils plan for agricultural development

A hundred agricultural industrialization enterprises with annual sales of more than 100 million yuan (\$15.47 million) will be built in Shanghai by 2025, said Zhang Guokun, director of the Shanghai Municipal Agricultural Commission in a conference on Jan 12.

Held by the municipal government, the conference explained the action plan for promoting high-quality agricultural development in Shanghai from 2021 to 2025. The plan pointed out that the institutional framework for high-quality agricultural development will be established by 2025.

According to Zhang, the city will cultivate 50 modern agricultural high-tech enterprises and guide 1,000 family farms and farmers' cooperatives in establishing demonstration sites.

To promote the green production method, the coverage rate of the green production base would reach 60 percent and the certification rate of green agricultural products would reach more than 30 percent. Twelve ecological pastures and 100 national healthy aquaculture demonstration farms will be built, Zhang said.

Shanghai will also build a 100,000 mu (6,667 hectares) unmanned farm for grain

production and a number of intelligent vegetable and fruit gardens by 2025 to promote an intelligent agricultural production base, Zhang added.

International News

FDA extends deadline for comments on traceability rule; announces changes



The FDA has updated its materials about a proposed food traceability rule — “Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods” (Food Traceability Proposed Rule).

Traceability in the food supply chain is crucial during outbreaks and recalls, according to food safety experts in the public and private sectors. Outbreaks during the past two years, particularly involving romaine lettuce, demonstrated

how the maze of shipping and receiving information stalled investigation efforts, allowing time for more people to become infected.

Traceability begins on the farm and ends when the consumer buys the product. During the romaine outbreaks in 2018 and 2019 it was well documented that many entities in the supply chain use paper records; much software in use is not compatible with that of trading partners; and that there is virtually no consistency in what information is gathered by trading partners along the way.

Frank Yiannas, FDA’s deputy commissioner for food policy and response, has kept the spotlight on traceability practices and regulations, working to encourage industry to make changes. In early 2020 he announced the FDA’s “New Era of Food Safety,” which focuses attention on traceability.

Changes to proposed rule

There are two main areas of change in the proposed traceability rule, which is in the public comment phase until Feb. 22, according to a statement from the FDA.

First, the agency has made edits to remove vague terms in the Food Traceability List (FTL), which shows the foods for which the additional traceability recordkeeping requirements in the proposed rule would apply.

Specifically, the edits to certain commodity descriptions were made for clarity and do not reflect a change in which foods are on the FTL. For instance, the word “fresh” was added to certain fruit and vegetable commodities to clarify the scope of those commodities. Also, the description for “cheeses, other than hard cheeses” was revised to clarify what specific cheeses are part of this designation, and to include examples of such cheeses.

All of the specific edits are described in a memo titled “Food Traceability List for

'Requirements for Additional Traceability Records for Certain Foods' Proposed Rule- Clarified Language.

The second area of change in the proposed regulation involves the agency's publication of a Frequently Asked Questions document to address queries it has received about the proposed rule.

The FDA gathered those questions during public meetings, through the FSMA Technical Assistance Network, and during other outreach engagements, according to a statement from the FDA. Those efforts were undertaken to assist stakeholders, including the general public, who are considering providing feedback during the comment period, which has been extended until Feb. 22.

Comments can be submitted at [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov), Docket ID: FDA-2014-N-0053.

FSA issues warning about safety of meat sold on Facebook



The Food Standards Agency has warned about potentially unsafe meat sold via

Facebook.

Implicated meat products were supplied before Jan. 15 by an unregistered and unapproved Wiltshire-based vendor. It is understood that distribution has occurred nationally across England, according to the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Brand names include Ushqime Organike, Bio UK; Ushqime BIO UK; Ushqime BIO and Wiltshire Farm Products, with all dates affected.

Authorities said the products are not compliant with food hygiene, safety, labeling and traceability requirements so they could be unsafe. Officials did not report any associated illnesses. The FSA advised people who have purchased the items not to eat them and dispose of the meat.

Warning when buying food on social media

Horsham District Council also alerted businesses and the public to the illegal meat seller marketing products via the social media site.

Meat including beef, lamb, veal and goat was processed in an unregistered establishment in the Wiltshire area of England.

Tricia Youtan, of Horsham District Council, said rules around the production and selling of food are strict for a reason.

“People selling unregulated food in this manner are putting the health of the general public at risk, as it is unlikely they would meet the required food and safety standards. I would urge residents to be wary of these types of sellers as the adverse health effects could be very serious,” she said.

John Carter, head of public protection at Wiltshire Council, said the FSA alert was

issued with its knowledge and cooperation.

“We encourage all consumers who may be thinking about purchasing food from online vendors advertising on social media platforms to check that the food business is registered with a local authority and that they have a food hygiene rating. This demonstrates that they have been inspected for compliance with the law and hygienic food handling operations by food safety officers,” he said.

“All food businesses must register and some businesses who supply food of animal origin on a wholesale basis may require a specific approval, either by the local authority or the Food Standards Agency.”

Meat operation from car wash sites

In mid-December, environmental health officers from Wiltshire Council’s food and safety team removed over two tons of fresh meat, including beef, lamb and goat from sale to the public. This meat has been condemned and destroyed.

They found the meat being cut and packed for delivery throughout the UK at a second hand car wash site in Ludgershall.

The council’s team and an FSA veterinary officer searched an Andover Road business under warrant on Nov. 27 and found whole and part carcasses being cut in conditions where meat was at risk of contamination.

Officers had previously searched Devizes Hand Car Wash on New Park Street on Oct. 23, where they saw fresh meat being cut in a vehicle workshop in unhygienic conditions.

Both car washes and meat cutting activities were being carried out by the same company.

Emergency enforcement action in October prohibited the activity in Devizes and 2.7 tons of meat was seized as unfit for human consumption. Products were condemned by Swindon Magistrates Court, who granted a Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Order to stop work continuing.

The business was moved to the car wash site at Ludgershall but did not register with the council or seek approval from the FSA, despite a warning after the previous enforcement action.

Simon Jacobs, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said conditions at both car wash sites shocked officers.

“They found that even the most basic requirements such as clean food rooms, a hot water supply, washing facilities, the control of pests and basic welfare facilities for food handlers were missing. This business has put their customers at risk,” he said.

“The need for officers to have to act in this way, not once but twice, is an extremely serious matter and we are working very closely with the Food Standards Agency on further enforcement to safeguard the public.”

Food poisoning top concern for people in Japan

Food poisoning has been the main food safety concern of surveyed Japanese people for almost every year since 2008, according to a study.

Food poisoning was ranked as the top food safety related hazard causing concern in 10 of the past 11 surveys from 2004 to 2018. However, the number of cases has decreased in the past 15 years with 1,330 infections in 2018, reported the study published in a journal managed by the Japan Science and Technology Agency.

Researchers looked at 15 years since the Food Safety Commission of Japan (FSCJ) was established in 2003. The study explored the changes in risk perception using the annual food safety monitor survey results published by the FSCJ.

The survey asks 470 people annually about hazards related to food safety; such as food additives, pesticide residues, antimicrobial resistance, contaminants such as cadmium, methylmercury, and arsenic, food poisoning due to microorganisms, and chemical substances from food contact materials.

One-off events and emerging concerns

A score is given for each hazard with the respondents giving 0 points for “I do not know about the hazard” and “I am not concerned at all,” one for “I am hardly concerned,” two for “I am not certain,” three for “I am somewhat concerned,” and four points for “I am very concerned.”

In the survey of 2004, contaminants including cadmium, methylmercury and arsenic and pesticide residues were ranked first and second. However, they have gradually gone down since 2008, and have placed lower than fifth since 2016.

In 2011, the hazard category ranked first was radioactive materials; however, it has continuously moved down and has been ranked lower than fifth since 2017. The 2011 survey was carried out just after the nuclear accident in Fukushima of that year. In contrast, food poisoning due to harmful microorganisms was fourth in 2004 and has been first since 2008 except in 2011.

In 2017 and 2018, allergens appeared in the top five issues while mycotoxins has been there for the past three years.

Communicating risk

Researchers also looked at differences in concern levels based on job experience

and gender.

Concern related to food additives and pesticide residues intentionally added to foods and controlled has gradually decreased. These scores were considerably lower in men than women. Scores were also lower for individuals with professional experience in the food sector than those without experience. Concern on contaminants were lower for men with professional experience.

Scientists said a gap between food specialists and other attributes in the basic recognition of risk makes it difficult to communicate effectively among various interested individuals.

“To improve the quality of risk communication in the food safety field, it will be necessary to provide scientific knowledge and information regarding food safety management mechanisms for individuals without professional experience in the food sector, taking into account the changes in information media and influence on risk perception,” they added.

Norway decides not to change raw milk rules; salmon producers face review

Norway has opted not to change the rules around the sale of unpasteurized, raw milk to protect consumer health.

In 2017, the Ministry of Health and Care Services commissioned the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (Mattilsynet) to prepare a draft regulation that allowed a limited sale of unpasteurized, raw milk and raw cream for human consumption.

Proposed changes in the rules could have seen farms sell up to 5,000 liters of raw milk or raw cream per year if certain conditions were met, such as satisfactory hygiene, an unbroken cold chain, and including a warning

statement.



Protect public health

The draft regulation was subject to public comment in 2018 and 2019 and received 37 comments.

In its decision not to change the regulations, the Ministry of Health and Care Services cited warnings from the National Institute of Public Health (Folkehelseinstituttet), the Veterinary Institute and Norwegian University of Life Sciences. All three groups raised questions about the possible risk of infection and of serious illness. Raw milk can contain *Campylobacter*, *Listeria monocytogenes* or Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC).

“Food in Norway must be safe, and the regulations for food and drink must protect consumers. It is our responsibility as politicians to facilitate this. It is on this basis that the government does not allow sales of raw milk or cream,” said

Bent Høie, Minister of Health and Care Services.

Currently, it is forbidden to sell raw milk and raw cream for human consumption. All raw milk must undergo heat treatment corresponding to pasteurization before it can be sold. In the regulations, there is a small exception for incidental sales of raw milk and cream. The example given is a hiker who walks past a farm in the mountains should be able to buy some milk, regardless of pasteurization, from the farmer.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority warns against drinking raw milk. This applies especially to vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

“From a public health perspective, a restrictive set of rules will be the most important risk-reducing measure to avoid illness in connection with the consumption of raw milk,” said Margrethe Hovda Røed, senior adviser at the Norwegian Food Safety Authority.

Listeria in fish control

Meanwhile, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority is to carry out an inspection campaign this year at salmon producers focused on *Listeria* control.

The agency will examine measures, sampling and procedures to prevent the fish from becoming contaminated with *Listeria* and routines to deal with any non-conformances.

“Since salmon and trout are largely eaten without heat treatment and used for ready-to-eat products such as sushi, sashimi, smoked and cured fish, it is important that producers have effective measures against *Listeria*,” said Elisabeth Wilmann, director of fish and seafood at the Norwegian Food Safety

Authority.

In 2018 and 2019, there were serious outbreaks of listeriosis in several EU countries linked to consumption of fish products. The raw materials were Norwegian salmon and trout. Affected products were traced back to processing plants in Poland and Estonia, but it could not be ruled out that raw materials from Norway were contaminated.

This link and the fact that more countries are making demands concerning Listeria in Norwegian fish is why the agency is running the campaign, said Wilmann.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority's experience is that operators of fish processing plants have a good knowledge of microbiological hazards in fish, and that targeted work has been done on measures against Listeria. However, it is regularly detected in the production environment of such sites.

The campaign started in mid-January and runs until September with a final report expected toward the end of this year.

Germany and Denmark record low pesticide residue findings on food

Officials in Germany and Denmark have reported low levels of pesticide residues in food.

A report, published by the German Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), is based on results from 20,283 food samples as part of official controls in 2019. Selection of samples was largely risk-based, which means local authorities looked more at food that had caused issues in the past.

In 2019, Germany issued 38 Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) notifications because of pesticide residues. Twelve of them were alerts.

For cereals, the proportion of samples examined with detected residues fell from 46 percent in 2018 to 31 percent of 850 samples in 2019. The number above the maximum residue level also fell from 4.7 percent to 3.2 percent.

For foods with at least 100 examined samples, most problems were found in pomegranates, tea and beans with pods. Foodstuffs with non-compliance rates of more than 10 percent were mainly exotic fruits and vegetables like okras, cactus fruits, guavas and passion fruits.



Detail by category

For infants and young children, low levels for pesticides apply. While the rate of exceedances fell from 2015 to 1.2 percent in 2018, it rose to 2.9 percent in 2019, or 15 of 516 samples. The proportion of samples for these vulnerable groups in which residues were quantifiable increased to 16.5 percent from 14.4 percent in 2018.

In 2019, the maximum residue levels were exceeded in 1 percent of examined foods from Germany compared to 1.3 percent in 2018. For food from other EU countries, the rate was 1.3 percent versus 1.5 percent in 2018. For products from non-EU nations 6.5 percent were non-compliant compared to 8.8 percent in 2018.

For organic food, the proportion of samples with residues above the maximum levels was 1 percent. For the comparable categories of conventional goods, this value was 2.6 percent.

More than one substance was detected in nearly a quarter of all samples examined. In individual samples of tea, strawberries, peppers and chillies, table grapes, fresh herbs, tomatoes, mangoes, cherries, cucumbers and zucchinis more than 10 different active ingredients were found.

On average, each food sample was analyzed for 378 different substances. For 153 substances residues above the maximum residue levels were detected. The most noticeable among the 663 MRL exceedances were nicotine, fosetyl, dithiocarbamates and chlorpyrifos.

Danish findings

Meanwhile, the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (Fødevarestyrelsen) found there is generally a low amount of pesticide residue in the fruit and vegetables sold in supermarkets.

The report, prepared with the DTU Food Institute, revealed the overall picture for pesticide residues in food on the Danish market was comparable with previous years.

In 2019, 2,055 samples were taken of different fruits, vegetables and cereals

products. In 98 percent of these foods, pesticide residues were below the legal limit.

Eight samples of fruit, 12 of vegetables and three of cereals had pesticide residues above the limit. Two were Danish and 21 samples were foreign. Three were adjudged to pose a health risk and were withdrawn from the market.

Pesticide residues were found in 72 percent of 591 fruit samples, 34 percent of 583 vegetables and 45 percent of cereals, rice and corn.

A total of 175 organic product samples were taken and pesticide residues were found in two organic vegetable items – a banana from Ecuador and kale from Spain both contained spinosad.

Some foods contained several different pesticides in the same sample. One sample from another EU country contained 10 pesticides and one from outside the EU had nine.

USDA increasing certification requirements for organic imports from India

The USDA's Organic Program (NOP) is changing its approach to oversight of imports from India.

The USDA is ending its recognition agreement that had allowed Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority accredited certifiers to provide USDA organic certification in India. The APEDA is an apex body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the government of India.

This decision has started a transition period that will allow Indian organic operations certified by APEDA-accredited certifiers to apply for direct

certification by USDA-accredited certifiers to the USDA organic standards. Certification by USDA-accredited certifiers will be required for products exported from India to the United States.

This transition will help mitigate the market impact of this change. During this period, the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), which oversees the NOP, will work closely with certifiers to communicate the transition process and assess progress. They will also heighten its market surveillance and will closely communicate with APEDA about enforcement needs.

The timetable for how the transition will work is:

By July 12 2021, to continue to export to the United States, current organic operations in India will need to have applied for certification with a USDA-accredited organic certifier.

By mid-March 2021, USDA certifiers will be able to list these organic operation applicants in India in the Organic Integrity Database, to help U.S. buyers verify that a farm or business in India has applied for NOP certification.

After July 12 2022, USDA organic certification by a USDA-accredited certifier will be required to import organic products from India to the United States.

APEDA-accredited certifiers may apply to NOP for direct accreditation by the USDA organic program at any time.

Organic certifiers and operations in India are responsible for ensuring compliance to any additional Government of India export requirements, including TraceNet reporting and documentation.

Feds post another foodborne illness outbreak of unknown origin



Today the FDA announced a new foodborne illness outbreak from an unknown source. The outbreak comes on the heels of three others of unknown origin that were investigated in late 2020. Those events have since been declared over.

In the Food and Drug Administration's "CORE Investigation Table Update" the new outbreak constitutes a huge one-liner as you read across the boxes in the weekly grid. Without the source, though, there are few details available, according to an FDA spokesperson.

"If an entry in this column reads 'Not Yet Identified' we don't have enough evidence to determine what specific food is making people sick at this stage of the investigation. The investigations on the table will be at many different stages, and when we have narrowed the traceback investigation enough to identify a likely food as the suspect vehicle, we will report that information publicly,"

according to a spokesperson for the CORE program.

“After looking for signals that could be an early warning of an outbreak and then determining that an FDA-regulated food item is likely causing an outbreak, the outbreak is transferred to a response team. At that time, the information regarding that outbreak will post on the CORE Investigation Table.”

As of this afternoon neither the FDA nor the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had added any outbreak notices to their websites yet this year.

“... when we have narrowed the traceback investigation enough to identify a likely food as the suspect vehicle, we will report that information publicly,” said the FDA spokesperson.

FSAI flags food safety research priorities



The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) has identified emerging food safety

risks, food chain vulnerability assessments and fresh produce traceability as areas for research.

The agency said research is needed to address gaps in knowledge, support regulation and identify emerging issues and threats to the food system in Ireland.

FSAI publishes areas of priority research for bodies that fund such work and scientists in institutes so they can be part of research calls by funding agencies or the subject of researcher-led funding proposals. The research needs document includes topics that would help the risk assessment and management work of FSAI and support protection of public health.

Fraud, produce and circular economy

One topic is vulnerability assessments. These are necessary to prioritize monitoring and surveillance and understand security of the food chain. Key supply chains in Ireland should be mapped and points of vulnerability established. Priorities are the beef, pork, poultry and white fish product sectors.

Synthetic biology remixes DNA sequences to create foods not seen in nature but food safety is not always addressed during the development phase. A report looking at this area, its potential use in the food sector and possible food safety aspects could be a useful resource for regulatory scientists, according to FSAI.

Evidence suggests potential involvement of fresh produce in outbreaks but a definitive epidemiological link has never been established in Ireland. Research is needed to develop a traceability system accessible by all parties and the authorities that will help rapid identification and recall of unsafe produce, said FSAI.

The authority said there is a need for more accurate detection of hazards and multiple hazard methods capable of simultaneously detecting a number of issues in food. Methods also need to be cheaper, simpler and faster. Development of rapid test kits to detect mycotoxins is another area as it is expected contamination of Irish crops will increase in the future with warmer and wetter weather.

Another area is impact of the circular economy on food safety. Incidents have highlighted the use of recycled materials at farm level leading to contamination of meat and milk with persistent organic pollutants. Inappropriate use of recycled materials could also lead to contamination of food because of substances leaching out.

There is a need to establish seasonal prevalence of natural toxins such as tropane, pyrrolizidine, and ergot alkaloids in Irish grown crops. Potential impacts on occurrence of plant toxins because of changing EU policies for reduced use of pesticides and enhanced biodiversity also needs to be examined.

Additives, fishery and nutriviigilance

The EU Commission has proposed lower maximum permitted levels for nitrate and nitrite and there are concerns in the Irish industry about the impact on cured meat products in terms of stability and shelf-life. Any study should assess the minimum amount of these additives that are required to ensure microbial safety and stability throughout the shelf-life of meat products, according to FSAI.

There is concern that paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) findings will become more regular and increase in geographical distribution. Occurrence in Irish coastal waters has led to the contamination of shellfish in classified production areas.

Creation of a nutriviigilance system in Ireland is also mentioned. This is an adverse event reporting system that provides early signals of emerging chemical risks from foods or food supplements and already exists in some European countries. There have been incidents such as wild mushroom and apricot kernel poisoning and presence of illegal steroids in sports supplements in Ireland in recent years.

FSAI also wants data on consumption and composition of some food supplements and seafood consumption for children to help with risk assessment.

In 2020, another FSAI publication looked at new and emerging food processing technologies and potential risks to food safety. It included high pressure processing (HPP), ultraviolet light, radio frequency heating, electron beam processing, cold plasma and ozone treatment.

New Zealand Food Safety advances plan to reduce campylobacteriosis

New Zealand Food Safety is out with a risk-based action plan for the next year that incorporates a whole-of-food chain approach to the identification, selection and implementation of new control measures to significantly reduce the foodborne campylobacteriosis burden in New Zealand.

The Action Plan includes: prioritization of selected actions for immediate evaluation/implementation; identification of a further list of potential control measures on the basis of current knowledge, and establishing a framework for their systematic evaluation, prioritization and implementation; setting of a public health improvement goal for the reduction of foodborne campylobacteriosis; and a lead-in to medium-term control measures that will likely be implemented in out-years 2022-2023.

Under the plan, New Zealand Food Safety will be primarily responsible for agreed actions and reporting against the work schedule. Industry will have responsibility for implementing both legislated and non-legislated actions.

The Action Plan includes:

- prioritization of selected actions for immediate evaluation/implementation;
- identification of a further list of potential control measures on the basis of current knowledge, and establishing a framework for their systematic evaluation, prioritisation and implementation;
- setting of a public health improvement goal for the reduction of foodborne campylobacteriosis; and
- a lead-in to medium-term control measures that will likely be implemented in out-years 2022-2023.

New Zealand Plan principles:

- The Action Plan will continue to be progressed collectively with government, industry and other interested parties.
- A set of immediate actions will be complemented by a parallel set of medium-term actions that evolve from collaborative workshops.
- A whole-of-food chain approach will be taken in identification and selection of possible control measures, which will be initially categorised as follows:
 - ✓ those based on good hygienic practice; or
 - ✓ those that are hazard-based; or
 - ✓ those that are risk-based.

- Wherever possible and practical, actions and implementation of control measures will be on the basis of risk assessment and estimated levels of risk reduction (risk-based measures). However, some measures will likely be selected on the basis of reduction in levels of contamination at different steps in the food chain (hazard-based measures) and some will likely be selected qualitatively on the basis of good hygienic practice.
- Risk management decisions on control measures will include inputs on the level of scientific justification (as above), practicality and likely costs.
- Progress will be subject to formal reporting, including performance against any regulatory targets and the public health goal.

Organic equivalency agreement puts U.S., UK producers on even ground



The new year marks the implementation of a new agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom, making it possible for organic products certified in one country to be considered automatically certified in the other.

The agreement involves the U.S. Department of Agriculture because the National Organic Program is under its control. The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, which directly oversees the organic program, reports that the agreement includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

There are a number of steps involved in organic trade with the United Kingdom.

A new import process will be in place for all USDA organic products sent to the UK under the arrangement, according to U.S. officials. As of Jan. 1 the UK started requiring a "certificate of inspection." The original document needs to be signed within 10 working days for the shipment to be marketed as organic.

Companies in the U.S. must now also provide a new Great Britain import document to export goods to England, Wales and Scotland. Goods going to Northern Ireland will still be covered by the European Union's Trade Control and Expert System.

The U.S. Agricultural Marketing Service announcement says the agreement does not cover aquatic animals — including fish and shellfish — or products derived from animals treated with antibiotics when exported from the UK.

EU project targets safe food for infants

An EU-funded project aiming to boost food safety for infants in the European Union and China has begun.

The Safe Food for Infants in the EU and China (SAFFI) project is planned to run until the end of August 2024 and involves academia, food safety authorities, infant food companies, and technology and data-science SMEs. EU funding in the Horizon 2020 project is almost €4 million (\$4.9 million) with an overall budget of €6.75 million (\$8.2 million).

Work from 20 partners, led by the French National Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment (INRAE), is targeting food for the EU's 15 million and China's 45 million children younger than age three.

Project plan

The aim is to develop an approach to boost the identification, assessment, detection and mitigation of safety risks posed by microbial and chemical hazards along EU and China infant food chains.

Partners will benchmark the main risks through a hazard identification system based on multiple data sources and a risk ranking procedure. Four case studies will be selected to cover priority hazards, main ingredients, processes and control steps of the infant food chain.

The hope is to discover any unexpected contaminants by predictive toxicology and improve risk-based food safety management of biohazards by omics and predictive microbiology. The end result should be a decision support system designed to enhance safety control along the food chain.

Resulting databases, tools and procedures will be shared, cross-validated, linked, benchmarked and harmonized for further use in the EU and China.

SAFFI will also set up training and knowledge transfer activities to help EU-China harmonization of good practices, regulations, standards and technologies, and will work with other projects under the EU-China FAB Flagship initiative on food safety control.

Partners include the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety (ANSES), Wageningen University in the Netherlands, Institute for Food and Agricultural Research and Technology (IRTA) in Spain, Fraunhofer

in Germany, manufacturers HiPP International and FrieslandCampina as well as Zhejiang University, Yangzhou Fangguang Food Co. and Jiangsu Academy of Agricultural Sciences in China.



Similar project ongoing

Another project looking at food safety and authenticity in Europe and China is ongoing. The effort, called EU-China-Safe and coordinated by Queen's University Belfast, began in 2017 and is scheduled to end in August 2021.

It involves 15 participants from the EU and 18 from China including the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), Nestlé, Fera Science, Danone, Nofima in Norway, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment (CFSA).

The aim is to build the core components needed for a joint EU-China food safety system including control management, food legislation, inspection, food control

laboratories, and food safety and quality information, education and communication.

It will develop an EU-China Joint Laboratory Network to demonstrate equivalency of results, and a virtual lab, with interchangeable staff from two continents, as a showcase to communicate and demonstrate best practices.

Trade barriers caused by food safety and fraud issues are being analyzed with recommendations made on how to predict and prevent future issues. The project is looking at the most commonly reported foods linked to chemical and microbiological contamination and fraud such as infant formula, processed meat, fruits, vegetables, wine, honey and spices.

Digital tech project

Finally, the EU-funded DiTECT project also recently launched with 33 participants and a budget of €4 million (\$4.9 million).

The Agricultural University of Athens is leading the project with another 20 partners from the EU and 12 from China.

This work will develop a big data-enabled platform capable of predicting food safety parameters of a given product based on data collected in real time via sensors related to crops, grain storage, livestock and in the food supply. Methods will monitor and control environmental pollutants as well as chemical and biological hazards.

Digital Technologies as an enabler for a continuous transformation of food safety system (DiTECT) is a cloud-enabled storage system to predict food safety and will also incorporate blockchain.

Other partners are Cranfield University, Shandong Agricultural University,

Videometer, Nemis Technologies, Glanbia and the Ministry of Health in Cyprus.

Swiss Listeria outbreak shows risk of cheese recontamination



A multi-year Listeria outbreak in Switzerland that killed 10 people was linked to pasteurized cheese products, according to a study.

The incident highlights the risk for recontamination of cheese during manufacturing and emphasizes the need for routine sampling of products, manufacturing equipment, and the production environment, said researchers in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

The two year outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* also caused 34 laboratory-confirmed cases. The nationwide incident was traced to persistent environmental contamination of a dairy with *Listeria monocytogenes*. Results of an investigation implicated the Käserei Vogel dairy that had sanitation shortcomings at the production site in Steinerberg, Schwyz.

Initial investigation didn't find source

In 2018, the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) recorded 52 cases of listeriosis. However, from March 6 to July 31, 2018, an increase of *Listeria monocytogenes* serotype 4b with 13 cases was recorded. Whole genome sequencing (WGS) was performed on these strains. Twelve of 13 isolates were closely related.

An outbreak investigation was started by the SFOPH and patients were contacted to assess food exposures by using a standardized questionnaire. However, the investigation did not lead to a suspect food, and the vehicle of infection remained unknown.

In a second wave, onset dates ranged from Jan. 22 to May 26, 2020. Another 27 infections with *Listeria monocytogenes* serotype 4b were recorded; four were hospital patients who had underlying conditions. Questionnaire-based data were not available to support a food hypothesis. A total of 22 strains grouped in a tight cluster on the basis of WGS.

Median age of the patients was 81 with a range of less than 1 to 99 years old. Eighteen of 34 affected people were women. One case of transmission from the mother to the baby close to the birth and 10 deaths were reported.

In late April 2020, Käserei Vogel reported to the cantonal laboratory it had detected *Listeria monocytogenes* from a sample of soft (brie) cheese made from pasteurized milk. Analysis was part of the manufacturer's routine quality controls, which are mandatory in Switzerland. The cheese isolate matched the outbreak strain when compared by WGS.

WGS helped show close relatedness between isolates from cheese and the environment, and link the listeriosis cases from 2018 to the 2020 outbreak.

Isolation and WGS typing of *Listeria monocytogenes* from this quality control cheese sample provided crucial information that enabled the origin of contamination to be identified, according to researchers.

Sampling findings

Authorities traced the distribution chain of the dairy. The producer supplied several buyers who provided cheese to retailers throughout Switzerland. Buyers were told to stop delivery of products from the producer.

Findings prompted environmental sampling at the production site of Käserei Vogel. A total of 50 swab specimens from vats, cheese harps, skimming devices, sink drains, brushes, scrub sponges, trays, door handles, ripening cellar floors, and walls were taken.

Listeria monocytogenes was identified in 11 environmental samples, and all five sequenced isolates matched the outbreak strain. These results led to a recall in early May of 26 items, including brie, sheep and goat cheese, and organic cheeses and production was stopped.

After the recall of implicated products and a public warning by the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office, seven cases of listeriosis caused by the outbreak strain were recorded. The last known patient was sampled on May 20 and reported to SFOPH on May 25, 2020.

In August, the Schwyz Public Prosecutor's Office opened criminal proceedings in connection with the incident to investigate allegations against the owner of the cheese firm.

EU amends maximum residue limits for pesticides in certain products

According to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005, Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) are

the upper levels of pesticide residues that are legally permissible in, or on, food or animal feed, based on good agricultural practice (GAP) and the lowest exposure necessary to protect vulnerable consumers.

New Commission Regulation (EC) No 2020/1633 amended Regulation (EC) 396/2005 relating to the MRLs for pesticide residues of azinphos-methyl, bentazone, dimethomorph, fludioxonil, flufenoxuron, oxadiazon, pyraclostrobin, repellents: tall oil and teflubenzuron, in or on certain products. Details of the changes are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Amendments to Annexes II, III, IV and V to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 according to the Annex of the new regulation

PESTICIDES	PRODUCTS FOR WHICH THE MRLS WERE UPDATED	MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVELS (MG/KG)
Bentazone (CAS# 25057-89-0)	Potatoes, products of animal origin, herbal infusions from leaves and herbs, and leeks	
Dimethomorph (CAS# 110488-70-5)	Blackberries and raspberries	
Fludioxonil (CAS # 131341-86-1)	Certain products of animal origin	
Pyraclostrobin (CAS # 175013-18-0)	Table grapes	
Teflubenzuron (CAS # 83121-18-0)	Products of animal origin	
Azinphos-methyl (CAS # 86-50-0)	Certain products except spices	
Oxadiazon (CAS #)	Certain products	

PESTICIDES	PRODUCTS FOR WHICH THE MRLS WERE UPDATED	MAXIMUM RESIDUE LEVELS (MG/KG)
19666-30-9)		
Flufenoxuron (CAS # 101463-69-8)	Certain products except tea	
Phosalone (CAS # 2310-17-0)	Certain products except spices	
Repellants: tall oil (CAS # 61790-12-3)	Certain products	

Approval of the active substance azinphos-methyl and oxadiazon has expired, and the active substance flufenoxuron, phosalone, and repellent: tall oil were not approved by the EU Regulation. Therefore, the existing MRLs for azinphos-methyl, flufenoxuron, oxadiazon, and phosalone are deleted from Annex II and III of regulation (EC) No 396/2005, in accordance with Article 17 of that Regulation in conjunction with Article 14(1). There is an exception for the MRLs of flufenoxuron in tea which is safe to consumers and corresponds to an import tolerance request from Japan, and the MRLs of azinphos-methyl and phosalone in spices which correspond to CODEX limits. For MRLs for repellents: tall oil removes the entry in Annex IV to Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 and list default values, 0.01 mg/kg for that substance in Annex V of that regulation.

Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 as it stood before being amended by this Regulation shall continue to apply to products which were produced in, or imported into, the Union before May 25, 2021, except for pyraclostrobin in table grapes and repellents: tall oil in all products.

Safety Alerts

Date	Brand Name(s)	Product Description	Product Type	Recall Reason Description	Company Name
01/22/2021	House-Autry	Tartar Sauce	Food & Beverages	Spoilage	House-Autry Mills, Inc.
01/22/2021	Door County Coffee & Tea Co.	French Vanilla Flavored Cappuccino Single Serve Cups	Food & Beverages	Product may contain undeclared milk and soy.	Door County Coffee & Tea Co.
01/21/2021	Ruffles	Potato Chips	Food & Beverages, Allergens, Snack Food Item	Undeclared milk	Frito Lay
01/21/2021	Publix	Steam in bag products containing butternuts squash	Food & Beverages	Listeria monocytogenes	Publix Super Markets, Inc.
01/19/2021	Pero Family Farms	Butternut squash cubes, chunks, and spirals	Food & Beverages	Listeria monocytogenes	Pero Family Farms Food Company, LLC
01/19/	Lancaster	Butternut	Food &	Listeria	Lancaster

MARKET NEWS

2021	Foods	squash noodles, planks, chunks and butternut squash containing medleys and blends	Beverages	monocytogenes	Foods, LLC		Nelson's				d with extraneous material	
01/17/2021	Hiland Dairy	1% low fat chocolate milk	Food & Beverages, Contaminants, Milk/Milk Product	May contain food-grade sanitizers	Hiland Dairy	01/05/2021	Dole	Sesame Asian Chopped Salad Kit	Food & Beverages, Allergens, Prepared Food	Undeclared eggs	Dole Fresh Vegetables, Inc.	
01/16/2021	Champlain Chocolate Company	Select Milk Chocolate Products	Food & Beverages, Chocolate/Cocoa Product	Potential Foreign Objects - Brittle Plastic Pieces	Champlain Chocolate Company	12/31/2020	Divvies	Vanilla Cupcakes	Food & Beverages, Allergens, Bakery Product/Mix	Undeclared milk and eggs	Divvies, LLC	
01/11/2021	Sportmix, Nunn Better, ProPac, and Others	Dog and Cat Pet Food	Animal & Veterinary, Pet Food & Beverages, Pet Food	Aflatoxin Levels Exceed Acceptable Levels	Midwestern Pet Foods Inc.	12/31/2020	Backroad Country	Spicy Cajun Mix	Food & Beverages, Allergens, Snack Food Item	Undeclared milk	Lipari Foods	
01/11/2021	LAVVA	Blueberry Plant-Based Yogurt	Food & Beverages	Potential for Mold	EVR Foods Inc.	12/30/2020	Canyon Bakehouse	Canyon Bakehouse Everything Bagels	Food & Beverages	Potential presence of gluten	Flowers Foods, Inc.	
01/10/2021	Weis, Klein's,	Ice cream products	Food & Beverages	May be contaminate	Weis Markets	12/30/2020	Sportmix	Dog and Cat Food	Animal & Veterinary, Pet Food, Food & Beverages, Pet Food	Elevated levels of aflatoxin	Sportmix	
						12/28/2020	Legendary Baking	French Silk Pie	Food & Beverages	May contain undeclared pecans	Legendary Baking	

12/24/2020	Veladis	Herring in oil	Food & Beverages, Foodborne Illness, Fish	Listeria Monocytogenes	B&I Overseas Trading, Inc
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Enterprise News

Pork trade threatened for sixth year by African Swine Fever (ASF)



Before 2016, African Swine Fever hadn't been seen in Europe since 1985, but as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) turned its calendars over to 2021, the highly contagious disease was expected to show up for a sixth straight year.

The disease is endemic in most South-Saharan African countries and plenty active in Asia and Europe, according to the flow of OIE reports.

Since 2016, the world has seen 32,265 ASF outbreaks with 832,698 total cases. Pigs raised for commercial markets accounted for 14,327 outbreaks that made 10.1 million hogs susceptible to the disease. To control the disease, 8.2 million swine have been put to death.

The additional 17,938 outbreaks involved wild boar where 30,634 additional animals have been infected with ASF since the current endemic began.

In its most recent reporting for December 2020, OIE said there are currently new or ongoing outbreaks underway in 23 countries or territories. Eight of them are in Europe and include Germany, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine. Twelve are in Asia: People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Laos, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. And Four in Africa, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia.

During the past five years, OIE has taken reports from 60 countries, or 30 percent of its member states, about ASF outbreaks.

For December 2020, Europe was experiencing 51 outbreaks involving swineherds, and 113 involving wild boars. Wild boars infected with ASF often involve only one animal. In Asia, there were 54 new outbreaks and 42 involved boars. In addition to commercial pigs and boars, OIE's Early Warning System also tracks so-called backyard outbreaks that may involve a family pig or two.

“The global pattern of distribution of ASF in this period (December 2020) reveals a serious deterioration due to the spread of the disease, mainly in Europe and Asia, after the first occurrence in China in 2018,” the international report says. OIE says through its Global Steering Committee, it needs to empower regional alliances in the fight against transboundary animal diseases.

OIE also cautioned members to handle the trade of pork in accordance with proper hygienic practices according to international standards so as to not become a source of infection. It also called upon member states to step up biosecurity measures and keep domestic pigs away from wild boar.

African swine fever is a viral disease that threatens both domestic pigs and wild boar with a high mortality rate but does not affect people. The endemic has not yet reached North America. For the past year, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has worked with the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac) on an ASF vaccine.

ASF is seen as such a deadly and fast-spreading viral disease, that Canadian officials fear it could devastate the country's pork industry if it were to get started. Increased research is part of Canada's preparedness strategy, they say. The CFIA-VIDO-InterVac agreement is to develop and test ASF vaccines and antivirals.

There are no vaccines or treatments approved for use against this pig disease.

Nestle recalls more than 381 tons of hot pockets for containing extraneous materials

Mt, Sterling, KY-based Nestlé Prepared Foods is recalling approximately 762,615 pounds of not-ready-to-eat (NRTE) pepperoni hot pockets product that may be contaminated with extraneous materials, specifically, pieces of glass and hard plastic, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) reports.

The frozen NRTE pepperoni hot pockets product was produced from Nov. 13, 2020, through Nov. 16, 2020. The product has a shelf life of 14 months. The

following product is subject to recall:

54-oz carton packages containing 12 "Nestlé HOT POCKETS BRAND SANDWICHES: PREMIUM PEPPERONI MADE WITH PORK, CHICKEN & BEEF PIZZA GARLIC BUTTERY CRUST" with a "BEST BEFORE FEB 2022" date and lot codes 0318544624, 0319544614, 0320544614, and 0321544614.

The product subject to recall bears the establishment number "EST. 7721A" inside the USDA mark of inspection. The product was shipped to retail locations nationwide.

The problem was discovered when the firm received four consumer complaints of extraneous material in the pepperoni hot pocket product.

The firm has received one report of a minor oral injury associated with the consumption of this product. FSIS has received no additional reports of injury or illness from consumption of this product. Anyone concerned about an injury or illness should contact a healthcare provider.

FSIS is concerned that some product may be frozen and in consumers' freezers. Consumers who have purchased this product are urged not to consume it. This product should be thrown away or returned to the place of purchase.

Lake Champlain recalls well more than 100 chocolate products after consumer complaint of plastic pieces

Implicated products in a new chocolate recall have dates covering the past year. Lake Champlain Chocolates launched the action because a consumer found a piece of plastic in a chocolate product from the company.

The company reports that it sells chocolate products under several brand names,

according to its recall notice posted on the Food and Drug Administration website. The products are in a variety of forms including gift packages, boxes and baskets. range from candy bars to gift baskets. See list below.



“LCC is issuing this recall after a consumer reported finding brittle plastic pieces in a finished product. After initial investigations and out of an abundance of caution, LCC is voluntarily recalling all potential affected product currently on the market from July 2020 through January 2021,” the notice states.

As of the posting of the recall notice there had not been any confirmed reports of injuries or adverse events in relation to the recalled chocolate products, according to company officials.

These chocolate products were distributed through retailers and distributors across all 50 states and in the company’s three Vermont retail stores.

LCC is asking customers to discontinue use and immediately dispose of any

products listed above. Customers can find the “Best By Date” near the UPC number on the package. For any additional questions or concerns send email to info@lakechamplainchocolates.com.

Certain Dungeness crabs recalled because of poisoning risk

The Quinault Tribe of the Northwestern United States is voluntarily recalling almost 58,000 pounds of live or un-eviscerated Dungeness crab because of possible domoic acid contamination, which can cause amnesic shellfish poisoning in people.

With Dungeness crab being a popular New Year’s dish, public health officials in Washington state posted the recall notice today in hopes of reaching holiday cooks before meals are prepared. It is not clear how far the crab may have been distributed.

Domoic acid is a naturally occurring toxin produced by certain types of algae and can be harmful to humans if contaminated shellfish is consumed.

Domoic acid can cause amnesic shellfish poisoning (ASP) with symptoms including vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, and abdominal cramps within 24 hours of ingestion. In severe cases, ASP can cause permanent short-term memory loss.

All live or un-eviscerated Dungeness crab harvested from Dec. 23 through Dec. 28 from the Point Chehalis to Destruction Island GHPO056 zone by the Quinault Tribe are subject to recall.

The recalled live crab was sold to food processors in Washington State, with further distribution to wholesalers and retailers. This recall is being issued due to elevated domoic acid levels in crab viscera — the internal organs or “butter” — tested during enhanced biotoxin monitoring.

Dungeness crab meat samples have not exceeded the FDA regulatory action level at this time. Customers who purchased live or whole crab harvested by the Quinault Tribe from during the designated harvest time are advised to destroy or eviscerate all product. Consumers with questions should contact the place of purchase.

Local health jurisdictions in Washington are not being asked to participate in any formal recall verification activities at this time, but appropriate staff should be aware of the recall.

MARKET NEWS - REPLY

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