MARKET NEWS

May 2025

Mérieux NutriSciences

BETTER FOOD. BETTER HEALTH. BETTER WORLD.

CONTENTS

Focus on China

NPC Standing Committee conducts enforcement inspections of food safety law

BEIJING -- The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, on Friday launched a new round of enforcement inspection of the Food Safety Law. This effort aims to strengthen food safety supervision and further enhance overall food safety efforts.

The Food Safety Law was promulgated in 2009 and underwent a comprehensive revision in 2015. Prior enforcement inspections were conducted by the NPC Standing Committee in 2009, 2011, and 2016.

In this latest round of inspections, the team will carry out on-site evaluations in provincial-level regions such as Heilongjiang, Shanghai, Jiangxi, Henan, Guangxi, and Gansu.

Additionally, the standing committees of the people's congresses of Tianjin, Liaoning, Anhui, Hubei, Guizhou, and Qinghai will be entrusted to inspect the implementation of the law within their respective administrative regions.

The inspection teams will focus on eight key areas, including the construction of the food safety risk monitoring and assessment system, the supervision of food safety in schools, and the supervision of food imports and exports.

Cai Dafeng, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, emphasized the importance of firmly upholding the baseline of food safety, enhancing the effectiveness of food safety supervision, further promoting the comprehensive and effective implementation of the Food Safety Law to provide a strong legal guarantee to safeguard the health and safety of the people.

Chinese vice-premier calls for enhanced regulation of food safety, market order

ZHENGZHOU -- Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Guoqing has called for efforts to ensure food safety, maintain a fair and competitive market order, optimize China's consumer environment, and protect the interests of the people.

Zhang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks during an inspection tour in Central China's Henan province which began on Wednesday and ended on Thursday.

Noting that food safety is crucial to the lives and health of the people, Zhang urged strict prevention of problems at their source, strict management during the process and strict control of risks. He stressed that there can be no relaxation of such efforts at any point.

He emphasized that market supervision plays an important role in serving high-quality development and meeting the people's needs for high-quality life.

He called for enhanced capabilities to promptly identify and resolve problems. He also urged the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data to advance penetrative supervision, and called for continuous improvement of supervision and law enforcement, as well as the quality and efficiency of inspection and testing processes.

During a visit to the Yellow River flood control and drought relief headquarters, Zhang also stressed the importance of analyzing rainfall and flood trends promptly, of intensifying the identification of risks and hidden dangers, and of flood control preparations.

China launches campaign to curb food additive abuse

China has launched a nationwide campaign to curb the abuse of food additives across the entire supply chain, from farms to dining tables, according to a new plan released by the Food Safety Commission of the State Council, the country's cabinet.

The plan calls for tighter regulation of the production and sale of food additives, along with stricter oversight of their use in food processing and catering services. Authorities will target illegal practices such as substituting chemical substances for approved food additives.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has been urged to crack down on the use of banned agricultural inputs in the production of edible agricultural products. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology will enhance supervision over related industrial materials that may be misused in food production.

Health authorities are tasked with improving the dynamic management system of food additive categories, ensuring that new developments and risks are properly addressed. Also, the market regulation administration is expected to intensify monitoring efforts and investigate cases of food additive abuse, the plan said.

International News

EFSA report details pesticide residue situation

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published an annual report looking at pesticide residue levels in food.

The EFSA carried out a dietary risk assessment as part of its analysis of the results. This shows the probability that consumers will be exposed to a quantity of residues above a certain safety threshold. The agency concluded there is a low risk to consumer health from the estimated exposure to pesticide residues in the foods tested.

The Multiannual National Control Program (MANCP) part gathers data from targeted sampling, based on the level of risk. These national

programs provided 132,793 samples and 98 percent were compliant with EU legislation. Compliance rates for 2021 and 2022 were 97.5 percent and 97.8 percent, respectively.

In 2023, 58 percent of samples did not contain quantifiable residues, while 38.3 percent had residues within legal limits. The maximum residue level (MRL) was exceeded in almost 5,000 samples, of which 2,694 were non-compliant, after accounting for measurement uncertainty, and led to legal sanctions or enforcement action. On average, 249 different pesticide residues were analyzed per sample.

The non-compliance rate in samples from other countries was three times higher than the rate from reporting countries. The main countries from which non-compliant products were found were Turkey, India and Egypt. Most of these consignments were stopped at the border.

According to the report, up to 37 pesticides were reported in a sample of chili peppers from Cambodia. This item was deemed non-compliant and the product lot was destroyed.

Ethylene oxide, a pesticide not approved in Europe, was analyzed in 3,651 samples. In 40 samples the MRL was exceeded and 24 samples led to non-compliant results. Of those, 13 samples originated in India and four in Turkey. A decrease in notifications was observed compared to 2022.

In 48 samples of foods for infants and young children the MRL was exceeded, of which nine were non-compliant when taking measurement uncertainty into account. Substances most frequently found to exceed the MRL were copper compounds and chlorates. Chlorate findings likely occur after sanitization practices in the food chain and are not due to pesticide use.

The number of honey samples with pesticide residues above the MRLs was 30, of which 21 were non-compliant when accounting for measurement uncertainty. In total, 23 different pesticides were reported. The most frequent quantified ones were acetamiprid, amitraz, and boscalid.

Tracking trends

EFSA also analyzed the results of 13,246 random samples taken by member states, Norway, and Iceland from 12 of the most consumed products in Europe as part of the EU-coordinated control program. This program samples the same commodities every three years to track trends. For 2023 these were carrots, cauliflower, kiwi fruits, onions, oranges, pears, potatoes, dried beans, brown rice, rye, bovine liver and poultry fat. A total of 197 pesticides were covered.

Overall, 70 percent were free of quantifiable levels of residues, while 28 percent contained one or more residues within legal limits. MRLs were exceeded in 246 samples, of which 135 were non-compliant after taking into account measurement uncertainty.

In dried beans, the pesticides contributing the most to a MRL exceedance were fosetyl, glyphosate, and chlorpyrifos. Only glyphosate had an authorized use in this food. For brown rice, pesticides mainly contributing to a MRL exceedance were tricyclazole, propiconazole, imidacloprid, and chlormequat chloride. None of these substances are allowed in rice in the EU. EFSA recommended including dried beans and brown rice in control programs.

Of the 31 non-compliances in dried beans, samples from Argentina and Madagascar had the highest rate. From 45 results leading to non-compliances in rice, the highest rate came from Indian and Pakistan samples. Of 135 non-compliant samples, 42.2 percent were of EU origin while 54.8 percent were from outside the European market and this was unknown for 3 percent.

The highest number of multiple residues were found in two samples of pears, one of which was grown in the EU, where 14 different pesticides were quantified, all below the MRL values. The other, was grown in another country where 14 different pesticides were quantified, one of which led to a non-compliant result and the lot was not released to the market.

FDA says approval of 3 food dyes will help companies voluntarily switch to natural substances

As part of its attempt to force food companies to voluntarily stop using artificial food dyes, the FDA has approved three dyes that it says come from natural sources.

Galdieria extract blue, butterfly pea flower extract and calcium phosphate can all be used now by any food manufacturer for color-approved items, according to an announcement from the Food and Drug Administration.

The agency says the approvals are part of its plan to phase out petroleum-based dyes but it has not proposed any official regulations or rules. The switch is purely voluntary. The FDA is, however initiating the process to revoke authorization for two synthetic food colorings — Citrus Red No. 2 and Orange B — in the coming months.

Within the voluntary framework, the FDA is “working with industry” to eliminate six remaining synthetic dyes — FD&C Green No. 3, FD&C Red No. 40, FD&C Yellow No. 5, FD&C Yellow No. 6, FD&C Blue No. 1 and FD&C Blue No. 2 — from the food supply by the end of next year.

“FDA staff have been moving quickly to expedite the publication of these decisions, underscoring our serious intent to transition away from petroleum-based dyes in the food supply and provide new colors from natural sources,” said FDA Commissioner Martin Makary.

Galdieria extract blue is derived from the unicellular red algae Galdieria sulphuraria. It is approved for nonalcoholic beverages and beverage bases, breakfast cereal coatings, candies, frozen desserts, frostings and other sweet foods. The dye is produced by the French company Fermentalg.

Butterfly pea flower extract, derived from water extraction of the dried flower petals of the butterfly pea plant, can achieve colors of blue, green and purple. The dye is already approved for various drinks but has been expanded to cereals, crackers, candies and different snacks. The dye is produced by the St. Louis-based Sensient Colors LLC.

Calcium phosphate is a white color. It can be used now in ready-to-eat chicken products, white candy melts, doughnut sugar, and sugar for coated candies, among other foods. The dye is produced by Innophos Inc. of Cranbury, NJ.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has made artificial food dyes a priority in his campaign to Make America Healthy Again. He and Makary have said that artificial dyes contribute to a host of health problems from obesity to autism.

Kennedy said food producers have been feeding Americans petroleum-based chemicals without their knowledge or consent. There are currently requirements to declare artificial dyes on food labels.

"These poisonous compounds offer no nutritional benefit and pose real, measurable dangers to our children's health and development," said Kennedy. "That era is coming to an end."

In addition to approving the three new dyes, the FDA is initiating the process to revoke authorization for two synthetic food colorings — Citrus Red No. 2 and Orange B — within the coming months.

The agency is also partnering with the National Institutes of Health to conduct comprehensive research on how food additives impact children's health and development. It is also asking food companies to voluntarily remove FD&C Red No. 3 sooner than the 2027-2028 deadline previously required.

FDA Alerts Industry and Consumers about Palm Leaf Dinnerware

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a letter informing retailers, distributors, and importers of dinnerware (bowls, plates, cups, and cutlery) manufactured from the sheath of leaves from the *Areca catechu (A. catechu)* plant that such dinnerware may not lawfully be offered for sale in the U.S.

Palm leaf dinnerware is made from leaves of the *A. catechu* palm tree, manufactured outside the U.S., and imported and sold online and in stores in the U.S. by major retailers. These products are marketed in the U.S. as an eco-friendly, compostable, disposable, and

biodegradable alternative to single-use paper or plastic dinnerware. FDA researchExternal Link Disclaimer shows that naturally occurring toxins in these products migrate to food at levels that may pose a health risk to consumers. Therefore, the use of the sheath of *A. catechu* palm leaves in food contact articles such as dinnerware does not meet the statutory criteria for general recognition of safety (GRAS) and no authorizations exist for its use in food.

Naturally occurring toxic alkaloids, one of which is a known carcinogen, are present in various parts of the plant, including in the Areca (Betel) nut, which is the fruit seed of the *A. catechu* palm tree, and in the leaves. The FDA has taken action against other products sourced from these palm trees, including putting in place an Import Alert 23-15 on Areca nuts, because of health concerns related to dietary exposure to these alkaloids.

Given the limited information previously available about the safety of palm leaf dinnerware and the FDA's concerns with the safety of the plant source for these products, the FDA conducted research that showed these alkaloids can migrate to food from the dinnerware under the intended use conditions. The FDA used the results from this research and, combined with the available toxicological data, has determined that use of this dinnerware may pose a long-term risk to health when used routinely. After evaluating the available toxicological data and the results of its own research, FDA has placed all dinnerware products manufactured from the sheath of leaves from the *Areca catechu (A. catechu)* plant on Import Alert (IA 23-15) to help prevent the importation of these products for sale in the U.S. market.

The health concerns arising from the results of FDA's research and the available toxicological data are specific to dinnerware made from leaves of the *A. catechu* palm tree. Other plant-based dinnerware, such as those made with bamboo, sugar cane or sorghum, are outside the scope of this research. If consumers are unsure whether dinnerware are made of palm leaves, they should contact the product's manufacturer.

In line with the FDA's commitment to transparency, the agency included its evaluation of palm leaf dinnerware in a memorandum added to the public Post-market Determinations that the Use of a Substance is Not GRAS inventory. The FDA also maintains other public inventories listing effective Food Contact Notifications and completed GRAS Notices. The agency encourages the food industry to use these as a resource.

The FDA reminds industry to ensure food contact materials comply with FDA regulations and are of a purity suitable for their intended use, and to engage the agency about any questions on compliance and purity of food contact products before marketing products in the U.S.

The FDA is taking steps to protect public health, including adding palm leaf dinnerware to Import Alert 23-15 to prevent these products from coming into the country.

FDA Releases the CORE 2023 Annual Report: Investigations of Foodborne Outbreaks and Adverse Events in FDA-Regulated Foods

Today, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Coordinated Outbreak Response & Evaluation (CORE) Network released its annual report summarizing the investigations of foodborne outbreaks and adverse events in FDA-regulated human foods for the 2023 calendar year.

The FDA's CORE Network was established in 2011 with the mission to find, stop, and aid in the prevention of foodborne illness outbreaks. This is accomplished through disease surveillance, outbreak response, post-response activities, and collaboration with CDC, state and local public health agencies, and international public health partners. Every year, CORE evaluates and responds to numerous foodborne outbreaks and adverse events linked to FDA-regulated products.

In 2023, CORE evaluated 69 incidents, responded to 25, and issued advisories for 10. These numbers remain similar to recent years, with 65 incidents evaluated, 28 responses, and 11 advisories issued in 2022. CORE investigations resulted in numerous public health actions, including recalls, public health advisories, a Warning Letter, FDA prevention strategies, and country-wide Import Alerts. These are further described in the report.

The 2023 annual report highlights a few noteworthy outbreaks: illnesses linked to toxins from morel mushrooms, lead linked to cinnamon in applesauce pouches, and *Listeria monocytogenes* linked to soft serve ice cream cups.

Up-to-date information on outbreak-related activities and investigations can always be found on the CORE Outbreak Investigation Table, FDA's Public Health Advisories, Outbreak Investigation Reports, and publications.

Enterprise News

Mini Éclairs recalled in Canada after testing finds E. coli

Poppies Bakeries LLC is recalling Poppies brand Mini Éclairs from the marketplace because of possible generic E. coli contamination.

This recall was triggered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency test results.

The recalled product has been sold in British Columbia and Ontario, Canada and may have been distributed in other provinces and territories.

Recalled product:

Poppies – Mini Éclairs

- Size: 455 g
- UPC: 0 08563 95450 1
- Codes: Best Before: 2026 AL 03, L1L4024

As of the posting of this recall, there have been no reported illnesses associated with the consumption of this product.

Consumers should check to see if they have the recalled product in their homes. Recalled products should be thrown out or returned to the location where they were purchased.

Fresh & Ready Foods' history of violations precedes Listeria outbreak, recall

Fresh & Ready Foods, LLC, a San Fernando-based manufacturer of ready-to-eat sandwiches and snacks, has faced repeated food safety violations since 2009. FDA inspection records show ongoing concerns about sanitation and hazard controls.

The company announced a recall of more than 80 products on May 11 after federal regulators linked its facility to a Listeria monocytogenes outbreak that hospitalized 10 people in California and Nevada. No prior recalls or outbreaks are recorded for Fresh & Ready Foods.

From 2009 to 2022, the Food and Drug Administration documented multiple lapses in sanitation, monitoring, and hazard analysis during routine inspections, most of which resulted in Voluntary Action Indicated (VAI) classifications, according to eFoodAlert..

In 2009, inspectors found employees using unsanitary gloves, unsafe sanitizing agents, and improperly stored ingredients. The following year, regulators cited inadequate employee attire and significant failures in the facility's hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) plan, including insufficient monitoring, incorrect corrective actions, and incomplete records.

In 2015, the FDA again cited the facility for not adequately monitoring sanitation conditions. A 2017 inspection, classified as Official Action Indicated (OAI), found the plant was not maintained in a sanitary condition and lacked critical food safety procedures. No warning letter was issued in connection with those findings.

Inspections in 2018 and 2022 noted continued failures to properly monitor HACCP procedures and identify foreseeable hazards. The 2022 report also documented process controls that lacked adequate parameters.

Despite the repeated issues, the FDA issued no Form 483s — official documents listing inspection observations — and did not take enforcement actions beyond standard classification designations.

Fresh & Ready Foods, founded in 2001, supplies ready-to-eat sandwiches, salads, wraps, entrées, and snacks to hospitals, universities, hotels, airlines, convenience stores, and vending services

across the West Coast, Southwest, and Midwest. The company was acquired on Feb. 1, 2022, by Akoya Capital, Balance Point Capital, and Plexus Capital. It is inspected by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), the FDA, Safe Quality Food (SQF) auditors, and third-party entities.

Listeria outbreak

The Listeria monocytogenes outbreak, identified in December 2023, affected 10 people — all hospitalized — with the most recent case reported in September 2024. The CDC's 2024 investigation initially found insufficient evidence to identify a source. In April this year, however, an FDA inspection detected Listeria on equipment at Fresh & Ready Foods' facility. Whole genome sequencing confirmed the strain matched samples from outbreak patients.

The outbreak has affected nine men and one woman, aged 41 to 87, with a median age of 60. Eight cases occurred in California and two in Nevada. Six interviewed patients consumed Fresh & Ready Foods' products while hospitalized. Records show the company supplied three of the affected facilities.

Recall and response

In response to the outbreak, Fresh & Ready Foods recalled more than 80 ready-to-eat products with use-by dates from April 22 to May 19. The products were distributed between April 18 and April 28 in Arizona, California, Nevada, and Washington. The recalled items, sold under brands including Fresh & Ready Foods, City Point Market Fresh Food to Go, and Fresh Take Crave Away, include sandwiches and snacks.

A full list of recalled items can be viewed here.

No illnesses have been linked to the recalled products. According to the company's recall announcement, it has removed the contaminated equipment and implemented enhanced sanitation protocols. The FDA advises consumers, retailers, and foodservice operators to discard recalled products and sanitize any surfaces that may have come into contact with them. Consumers experiencing symptoms of listeriosis should contact a healthcare provider.

The FDA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are monitoring for additional patients, with no new illnesses reported since September 2024.

FDA solves Listeria outbreak after yearlong investigation; 86 products recalled

An FDA outbreak investigation that began in 2024 has finally revealed that the cause of Listeria infections is ready-to-eat foods.

Sandwiches and snack foods from Fresh & Ready Foods LLC of San Fernando, CA, have been found to be the source of the pathogen that has sickened 10 people in California and Nevada. All 10 have been hospitalized.

When the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began investigating the outbreak cluster in 2024, there was not enough evidence to identify a source of the Listeria monocytogenes that is making people sick.

The investigation was reopened in April this year after FDA investigators found Listeria in environmental samples collected from Fresh & Ready Foods, LLC production facility during a routine surveillance inspection. Whole genome sequencing (WGS) analysis confirmed that the strain of Listeria found at Fresh & Ready Foods LLC matches the strain of the pathogen causing illnesses in this outbreak, according to the FDA.

State and local public health officials interviewed people about the foods they ate before they got sick. Records reviewed from facilities indicated that ready-to-eat foods made by Fresh & Ready Foods LLC were confirmed to have been served in at least three of the facilities where the sick people were hospitalized.

In response to the investigation, Fresh & Ready Foods LLC voluntarily recalled 86 of their ready-to-eat foods or products that do not need additional cooking, including sandwiches, salads, burritos and snack items. The recalled products are identified by the use-by dates from April 22 to May 19 and include the following brand names:

- Fresh & Ready Foods
- City Point Market Fresh Food to Go
- Fresh Take Crave Away

The recalled products were distributed between April 18 and April 28 and sold in Arizona, California, Nevada and Washington at a variety of locations including retailers and food service locations such as hospitals, hotels, convenience stores, airports and airlines. The FDA reports that the products may have been further distributed to additional states.

To view a list of the 86 recalled products, click here.

MARKET NEWS - REPLY

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