

CONSUMER GOODS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (CGCSA) STATEMENT ON THE RECALL DIRECTIVE ANNOUNCED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOLLOWING OUTBREAK OF LISTERIOSIS DISEASE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA) welcomes the announcement by the Minister of Health, Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi, of the decision by the National Consumer Commission (NCC) to order a recall of processed meat products manufactured by Enterprise (a division of Tiger Brands) and by Rainbow (a division of RCL Foods). This follows the confirmation of laboratory tests by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), which confirmed Enterprise's factory was the source of the strain that resulted in the outbreak.

RESPONSE BY THE CGCSA

Retailer and Manufacturer members of the CGCSA have instituted immediate removal and recall of all products affected in compliance with the directive from the National Consumer Commission (NCC). This is because the safety and health of consumers is of paramount importance and our members will fully comply with the recall directive. The CGCSA and its members have and will continue to assist the Department of Health (DOH) to contain the outbreak. Members of the CGCSA had already, before the confirmation of the laboratory tests, been cooperating with the NICD by providing access to their facilities for inspection, and Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) have also been visiting them for swabs needed for microbiological testing where necessary. CGCSA members also have ongoing routine testing schedules in place to monitor all food products for pathogens and to take action if these organisms are detected. The members have, as a result of the latest outbreak, taken additional precautionary measures to ensure the safety of food products sold to consumers.

ADVICE TO CONSUMERS

The CGCSA is also reiterating the advice from the Minister of Health to urge consumers to adhere to the strictest hygienic and food safety practices. This includes washing hands, cook food thoroughly and keep food at safe temperatures. Should consumers suspect infection as per the mentioned symptoms, we recommend that they consult medical doctors to understand the cause of their symptoms. Our concern is always the health of consumers and our members will not compromise on this. The recent outbreak of Listeriosis is both unfortunate and regrettable given the reported deaths and illness of consumers.

RECALL OF AFFECTED PRODUCTS

Consumers are advised to follow recall information to identify affected products and to avoid food waste. Once products are identified by their batch code to be provided through the company recall information. Products can be cooked thoroughly before consumption and immediately consumed or disposed of in a manner to avoid environmental contamination. We would like to reiterate the Minister's advice that refrigerators and environments that were in contact with contaminated foods be cleaned with water containing bleach before new products are stored.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. WHAT IS LISTERIOSIS

Listeriosis is a serious, but treatable and preventable disease caused by the bacterium, *Listeria monocytogenes*. The bacterium is widely distributed in nature and can be found in soil, water and vegetation. Animal products and fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables can be contaminated from these sources.

2. HOW IS LISTERIOSIS TRANSMITTED

Listeriosis is usually spread through the ingestion of contaminated food products most frequently with raw or unpasteurised milk and soft cheeses, but also vegetables, processed foods, ready-to-eat meats and smoked fish products. Listeria can survive in normal temperatures associated with refrigeration (4°C). The Listeria bacterium can also be transmitted from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby during pregnancy or at the time of birth. Direct contact with the organism can cause skin lesions.

3. HOW DANGEROUS OR FATAL IS LISTERIOSIS

Infection with listeria may result in the following three conditions: flu-like illness with diarrhoea including fever; general body pains vomiting and weakness; infection of the bloodstream which is called septicaemia; and meningoenzephalitis (infection of the brain). Although anyone can get Listeriosis, those at high risk of developing severe disease include new-borns, the elderly, pregnant women, persons with weak immunity such as individuals with HIV, diabetes, cancer, chronic liver or kidney disease.

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ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE CONSUMER GOODS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (CGCSA) BY:

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