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Fujian to Inspect Health Companies for Ginkgo Extract

The FDA of Fujian province released a document that plans out a campaign to check health products that contain ginkgo extract, which are produced by the local companies.

The authority asks the companies to self inspect first. The related companies are asked to check the ingredient's procurement, usage, production and sales.

The regulator will then check all the related companies with a focus on the key companies. The self-inspection report will be checked as well as the recall of illegal products.

A spot check will follow. The inspection will look for illegal products that are not reported and will punish related companies severely. (Source: Fujian Daily)

China Food Safety Watchdog Urges Milk Recall

China's food safety watchdog on Tuesday urged three milk producers in Shaanxi Province to recall substandard infant formula milk powder products. China Food and Drug Administration said in a statement on its website that the three companies concerned should stop producing and selling the substandard products, all of which were made from goat milk.

Excessive nitrate was detected in five batches of milk powder products made by Shaanxi Guanshan Dairy Co. Ltd. on Jan. 23 and March 7 this year. Higher-than-standard selenium was found in another two batches of milk powder products produced



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by Xi'an Guanshan Dairy Co. Ltd. on April 7. and a subsidiary of Shengtang Industry Co. Ltd. on Feb. 3 this year respectively, according to the watchdog.

The China Food and Drug Administration urged its Shaanxi branch to investigate and hand out stern punishment to the companies in accordance with the law.

Shaanxi Guanshan Dairy Co. Ltd. has already issued a notice on its website, announcing that the company will recall the flawed products, halt production and take rectification measures.

A case involving adulterated milk in 2008 harmed thousands of children and resulted in the resignation of then chief of China's quarantine authority. (Source: Xinhua)

Health Product Industry Faces Stricter Regulation

A new round of inspection towards the ingredient and processing of health product will soon be launched, according to people familiar with the matter.

These people said that the new round of inspection follows the current inspection on plant and animal extract. It is likely that the state regulator will seriously inspect the chemical drugs as well as Chinese patent medicine.

The issue of ginkgo affects an increasing number of companies, including those companies that have already recalled products with the problematic ingredient.

CFDA said the related provincial regulators have taken measures including checking the names, batches and numbers of related products and asking the companies to recall or seal off the products.

The industry people estimated that after this round of inspection towards ginkgo extract, which reveals the problems in ingredient of health products, the

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quality control will therefore be enhanced in the future. (Source: Southern Metro)

State Regulator: Health Product Ads Have Serious Problems

State Administration of Industry and Commerce recently released a number of typical food safety cases, which reveals problems including false advertisement and trademark misuse.

The development of e-commerce provides more opportunities for illegal food and health product vendors. The regulator said that the false advertisement problem is typically severe on the online arena.

The typical way of false advertisement of food and health food by the illegal vendors is to use medical languages in the ads to confuse the consumers as well as exaggerate the effect of the product. (Source: Xinhua.net)

China's Underground Market for 40-Year-Old Meat

Chinese diners are known for their ability to eat just about anything. Menu items like stinky tofu, donkey burger and century eggs have broad appeal across China. But when it comes to 40-year-old

meat, is there a market?

Gangs of meat smugglers think so. Customs officials across China busted 21 smuggling rings so far this year and seized more than 100,000 tons of smuggled frozen chicken, beef and pork earlier this month, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. Some of the meat dated back to the 1970s and 80s, it said.



Officials found the meat in local wholesale markets, put its value at 3 billion yuan, or \$483 million, and arrested 20 people connected to the smuggling operation, Xinhua said.

Some of the meat found was smuggled through Hong Kong to Vietnam and then on to China, Xinhua said. It went on to the central city of Changsha for delivery to other parts of China, such as the southwest province of Sichuan and southern Guangdong province, Xinhua said.

Xinhua didn't elaborate on how the smugglers got the 40-year-old meat or why it hadn't been sold or eaten after all these decades.

What's clear is that the high demand for meat in

China has created an underground market for it.

As Chinese people have grown wealthier they have been eating more meat: China is already the world's largest meat consumer by volume, according to the research arm of Dutch lender Rabobank. But the local supply hasn't always been big enough to feed the demand.

That has created a lucrative market for imports, particularly for proteins like beef. Since China isn't a large steakholder, the country has started importing and is projected to boost its beef imports by 15% to 20% each year to 2019, Rabobank estimates.

Low government support for the industry, a lack of investment in beef production and high labor costs have created a "structural supply deficit" that is causing imports to double and smuggled beef to rise, Rabobank said.

The so-called gray market has spurred some meaty scandals in the past, with some sellers passing off rat meat as mutton in 2013. And there have been other incidents involving companies allegedly selling expired meat.

Of course, smuggling in China goes far beyond the meat trade. China's General Administration of Customs publishes countless tales of drug seizures on its website.

But meat may be among the most fragrant of customs issues. Xinhua said that one customs official who found the meat, which had been thawed and refrozen many times in transit, almost vomited when finding it. "It was smelly," Xinhua quoted him as saying. (Source: WSJ)

China's Steamed Bread Includes the Potato as Staple Food

China has successfully made the potato an ingredient of steamed bread after two years of efforts following a national strategy to convert the

potato into a staple of Chinese people's daily diet, the Ministry of Agriculture announced Tuesday. The ministry had said that the potato will soon become a staple after rice, wheat and corn, and 50 percent of the annual potato production will be consumed as staple food by 2020.

After over 12,000 failed attempts, steamed bread made with 30 percent of potato flour is now being sold at a few supermarkets in Beijing.

A bag of three pieces of potato steamed bread goes for 5.8 yuan (\$0.9), about twice as much as those made from wheat, The Beijing News reported. "We're promoting it and sell about a dozen bags a day," a supermarket employee said.

Compared to wheat steamed bread, the potato version is harder. "It's good and I did not notice the taste of potato," said a customer.

Mu Taihua, the research team leader, said that every 100 grams of potato steamed bread contain 14.59 milligrams of Vitamin C while the wheat ones barely have any. It also contains abundant minerals and dietary fiber, leading to a healthier diet.

The bread's producer, Beijing Haileida Food Company, said it plans to churn out about a ton of potato steamed bread every day, which will be delivered to 100 supermarkets. The company will increase its output based on feedback and plans to expand to 500 supermarkets by September.

"The potato steamed bread supplements the current staple food system and will increase the food supply, ensure food security and raise the farmers' income especially those who live in western China who depend on potato growing," Li Duo, a professor at the department of food science

and nutrition of Zhejiang University, told the Global Times Tuesday.

However, Li added that researchers should try harder to win more customers by improving its taste and nutritional value to compete with traditional ones. (source: Global Times)

Celebrities Fined For Online Squabble Over GM Food

Two high-profile social media personalities that have been embroiled in an online slanging match were ordered to pay damages and publicly apologize to each other by a court in Beijing Thursday.

Anti-fraud campaigner Fang Shimin, widely known by his online name Fang Zhouzi, and former China Central Television host Cui Yongyuan were also ordered by Haidian District People's Court in Beijing to remove defamatory online posts and pay 45,000 yuan (\$7,250) in damages.



Fang sued Cui in January 2014 over the GM food



debate. The case was accepted in April this year and the verdict was delivered on Thursday afternoon following a morning hearing.

As the quarrel heated up over the more than two-year period, often descending into personal insults, the public debate also extended from the basic concept of GM food safety to other issues like civilized online behavior.

The court ruling stated that the online spat between Cui and Fang started in September 2013. Both had defamed each other's reputations during this time.

The court found that if the posts were factual, even if strongly worded, they would not be deemed as infringing their reputation rights. However if the accusations could not be supported by evidence, the court said these posts are illegal and ordered them to be removed.

Examples of defamatory posts included Cui saying that Fang was a cheater, a swindler and a kidnapper. Fang posted that interviewees in a documentary Cui made about GM food in the US were hired by Cui to say anti-GM lines.

However, the court said that it was fine for Cui to accuse Fang of buying luxury houses in the US while claiming poverty online. Fang had also said that Cui had no academic background to do GM studies and had used insulting language toward Cui's mother.

Cui released a documentary in March 2014 in which he said that even though Americans had been eating GM food for years, few know about the technology or what it was doing to them.

Fang, a controversial US-educated biochemist, started to promote domestic GM food on the Internet in 2013.

Tian Zihui, an expert at Chinese University of Communication, said that the feud was quite typical of intellectuals who get involved in online disputes.

"They get very emotional and make the problem personal and forget the boundaries of freedom of speech," said Tian.

The court said that while the pair was debating an issue of public concern, this did not mean malicious personal attacks could be protected by freedom of speech over such issues.

An expert from the Ministry of Agriculture, who requested anonymity, told the Global Times that no scientific facts can be drawn from the two outsiders' debate, which only makes the public more divided and confused.

He said that if they continue their quarrel, the debate will just descend into a slanging match.

Currently, only genetically modified cotton and papaya are approved for commercial production in China. To counter falling agricultural productivity in recent years, the Chinese government stated for the first time in January 2015 that more effort will be put into studying GM organisms.

The GM food debate is a complicated issue, due to convoluted interests involved in the industry, such as overseas firms' plan to export GM food to China, said Luo Yunbo, a food science expert at China Agricultural University.

The public still remains dubious about GM food. A survey in March 2014 on huanqiu.com showed that 72 percent of respondents think GM food is unsafe and 22.5 percent said they are unsure about it. Only 4.8 percent of those polled believed GM food is safe. Another survey on Sina Weibo in 2013 showed



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that over 50 percent of over 4,000 participants said they are unsure about the safety of GM food.

Meanwhile, Cui and Fang have both stated their intentions to appeal the Thursday court ruling.

Fang told media after the hearing that he did not accept the court's decision and only sought to disseminate knowledge of GM technology and to correct rumors spread by Cui and others.

Cui described Fang as a "rogue" on his Sina Weibo Thursday.

A commentary published on the People's Daily WeChat account said that the court ruling shows clearly the two did not know where to draw the line in free speech and that both should reach a consensus on how to discuss in a civilized way in public. (Source: Global Times)

China's Unregulated Canine Farms Pose Threats to Both Dogs and Consumers



It has never occurred to Du Hanzhong (pseudonym) that he might name his dogs. Perhaps it is because he usually has around 200 of them. Or maybe it is because he knows his dogs will not keep him company for long.

Instead of providing years of companionship, Du's dogs will be up for sale at 6 months old and some at 4 months old. Unlike other dog sellers, Du never boasts of the cuteness of his dogs when bargaining

with his customers, focusing instead on their well-built bodies.

Locked in an iron cage, the dogs are weighed on a large scale and then loaded on a truck to be transported away.

"Once they go through my gate, they are none of my business," Du said calmly, trying to play down the sadness he once felt when parting with his dogs.

He knows well enough where the dogs end up. Either in dog meat processing factories or heading directly to the dinner tables of local families or restaurants, which is why he started his business three years ago in his hometown in Northwest China's Shaanxi Province.

"They [dog thieves] stole my dog in 2011. It was poisoned to death, but they left the body behind somehow. My hometown was under-developed and there were many slackers who would steal dogs for money since some local villagers eat dog meat," Du told the Global Times.

That was when Du decided to join the slackers and become a dog farmer as the business still thrives despite increasing uproar to stop the eating of dog meat.

There are no exact records regarding dog farms in China. Searching "dog farm" on the Baidu search engine only shows dog farms located in East China's Shandong Province or Northeast China, whereas the industry is actually spread across the country, according to several dog farmers reached by the Global Times.

Meanwhile, industry insiders almost unanimously agree that there are no "large-scale" dog farms in China. Compared to pig farms, which must have thousands of pigs to be considered "large scale," most dog farms have less than 700 dogs.

"There is no such thing as a large-scale dog farm. Dogs cannot be raised in a large number together.

They are prone to diseases and one sick dog can threaten a whole farm," said Fan Xiantao, head of Fankuai Dog Meat Products and the dog farm association of Peixian county in East China's Jiangsu Province, an area which is known for dog meat.

Fan's facility, covering 20,000 square meters, does not raise dogs on its own. When it is dog meat season, which begins around the Mid-Autumn Festival that falls on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, his company would go and purchase dogs from smaller farms or even households in the county.

"There are hundreds of thousands of dogs in Peixian county. It is our resource base," he said.

Dog farmers either directly contact dog meat processing companies or dog traffickers when their dogs are ready for slaughter.

There are two main kinds of "edible dogs" in the business: Chinese rural dogs and hybrids of large dogs, such as Caucasian Ovcharkas and Tibetan Mastiffs. Many dog farms in southern China prefer Chinese rural dogs, which are usually smaller with firm muscles, while farms in northern China tend to go for large dogs with more fat.

All dog farmers contacted refused to allow the Global Times to visit their farms. They said they were fearful that harassment by activists or an exposé on one farm would damage the industry. But many agreed to send photos to prove their existence.

As "livestock," the dogs are either locked in cages or put into dog sties with brick walls, according to photos sent to the Global Times or posted to an online chat group. Each dog is given an area of about 1.5 square meters on average as the animals often need to share a sty or cage with others. Violent dogs are raised individually in their own cages.

Some farms also have open spaces for dogs to play during the day.

According to farmers, a dog can be raised cheaply, with food costing less than one yuan (\$0.16) a day and one-time vaccines costing 10 yuan. Since there is no feed specially for dogs available on the market, many farmers use whatever is convenient for them to feed their dogs, including wheat bran, corn or green fodder.

Similar to pigs, dogs are ready for slaughter when they are 4 to 6 months old. As many dog farmers purchase 2-month-old puppies from local households or other farms, many dogs live on farms for less than four months. If they are kept for longer, the farmers will not make a profit.

Meanwhile, others also questioned the safety of dog meat consumption, especially as most stolen dogs were reportedly poisoned to death. (Source: Global Times)

China Updates is published weekly by the U.S. – China Health Products Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of dietary supplements and nutritional ingredients. The association's major focus is the continued development of China's overall natural health product industry as well as offer business services to its global members.

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