

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Secretary
Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards
Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City

08 June 1999

MEMORANDUM

F O R : SEC. EDGARDO J. ANGARA

T H R O U G H : USEC. DOMINGO F. PANGANIBAN

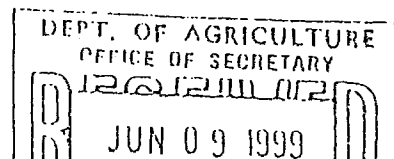
F R O M : *Dj. C. S.*
MA. CONCEPCION C. LIZADA
Acting Director, Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product
Standards

R E : Dioxin Contamination in Belgium

On 07 June 1999 BAFPS held initial discussions with BAI, NMIC and the Bureau of Food and Drugs of the DOH on the dioxin contamination in the food chain in Belgium. Information obtained by BAI through the Office of the Agricultural Attaché in Brussels, the Belgian Meat Board and the Royal Netherlands Embassy include the following:

1. In January 19-26, 1999 VERKEST, a Belgian company, sold mixtures of dioxin-contaminated industrial oil and animal oil as animal oil to *at least 10 Belgian feed mills, and 1 feed mill each in France and the Netherlands*. Germany is also believed to have been supplied with contaminated feeds.
2. A total of *430 poultry farms, 540 pig farms and 80 cattle farms* was supplied with contaminated feeds.
3. The Belgian government was first informed about the contamination in March, but the recall of chicken and eggs was made more than a month later. Measures have been taken to contain the harm resulting from the contamination in pork. The Belgian Meat Board has described the *situation for chicken as "more serious"*. The Belgian government has advised its citizens against consumption of such products as *mayonnaisse, pasta and cakes*.
4. The Netherlands has prohibited all imports of cattle, pigs, poultry and their products from Belgium. France has stopped all imports of poultry and eggs from Belgium and ordered the withdrawal of these products from retail shelves.
5. For this year, the Philippines has recorded total imports of *3, 246 MT and 2,734 MT of beef and pork*, respectively, from Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Germany. This year we imported a relatively small volume (51 MT) poultry meat only from the Netherlands.

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6. Philippine imports of Belgian preparations of cereals, flour, starch or milk totaled 921 MT and 77 MT in 1997 and 1998, respectively. We have no statistics for the current year.
7. In 1997 and 1998, Belgian feed imports into the country amounted to 3,732 MT and 2,383 MT, respectively.

The Office of Agricultural Affairs of the US embassy has furnished DAFPS a copy of the press release from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) announcing the holding of all imports from the EU of chicken and pork, as well as products containing chicken and pork. FSIS is reviewing imports since January to determine if additional action is needed.

The Japanese embassy has furnished information from the Ministry of Health that government instructions on imports of chicken, beef, pork, eggs, milk and processed food containing more than 2 % eggs from Belgium and France have been issued. Similar instructions cover chicken and pork meat from the Netherlands. Imports in transit are to be held at customs. The private sector has been instructed to refrain from selling the above products that have entered the Japanese market since 15 January 1999.

After considering the above developments, and the highly carcinogenic, teratogenic and persistent nature of dioxin, the meeting of the BAI, NMIC, LDC, NDA, BPI convened by DAFPS today, recommends the following:

1. suspension of imports of feeds, meat and meat products, eggs, milk and milk products, as well as processed foods containing the same from Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Germany;
2. issuance of import permits for the above products originating from other EU countries only upon certification by the duly authorized veterinary officer in the exporting country that the product is free from dioxin contamination;
3. holding of all above-mentioned products originating from any EU country shipped prior to the promulgation of this order, and release of such products only upon issuance of a certification that they are free from dioxin contamination;
4. spot-checking of certified shipments through the SGS at the expense of the exporter or the slaughterhouse, availing of the agreement entered into between this company and the Belgian government;
5. implementation of measures to enable at least one laboratory to monitor dioxin levels in the products of concern; and
6. the creation of an *ad hoc* committee consisting of concerned DA agencies, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Bureau of Food and Drugs of the DOH, representatives from the private sector and academe to consider the foregoing recommendations and other measures to guard against the hazard posed by dioxin-contaminated products

For your information and consideration.