

1. Meat industry under scrutiny as horsemeat scandal spreads

Horsemeat has been discovered in products labelled as 100 percent beef and sold in Sweden, the UK and France. Food authorities in those countries have launched investigations but the supply chain being studied includes more countries.

In January 2013, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland found that 10 out of 27 hamburger products it analysed in a study contained horse DNA, while 23 of them tested positive for pig DNA. In one sample from Tesco – Britain's largest grocery chain – the horsemeat accounted for about 29 percent of the burger.



In early February, Britain's Food Standards Agency (FSA) confirmed that up to 60 percent horsemeat was present in a number of sample products tested. A letter from Comigel, a French supplier for several other companies in Europe, even suggested that the contamination might date back to August 2012. *Agence France-Presse* reported that Comigel supplies products to customers in 16 countries.

The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority confirmed later during February that Dutch supermarket chains had also withdrawn certain products from their shelves, while their authenticity was investigated.

Altogether, this horsemeat scandal of Europe has resulted in supermarket chains removing millions of 'beef' products. Currently, DNA testing is applied in order to remove horsemeat comprehensive out of the market along with investigations to find out the responsible party for this scandal. The European Union leaderships are trying their best to regain customers' confidence, which has been badly shaken.

(www.cnn.com, 15.02.13)

2. Made-in-France Goat Milk Formula for Vietnamese Babies?

The Hanoi Market Management Department has recently confiscated 5,600 cans of a goat-milk baby formula product named 'Danlait', as its importer was found to have violated three relevant regulations.

Danlait was marketed as produced by the France-based FIT group www.fitsa-group.com, which was claimed to be 'one of the leading dairy producers in Europe', while local consumers have recently discovered that the producer is in fact a small firm, and the milk quality is as not high as claimed.



www.vietnamnews.vn

Manh Cam Co Ltd, which solely imported and distributed the product nationwide, thus came under scrutiny and it was eventually found that the firm had breached three regulations, according to a brief report released by the Hanoi Market Management Team No.12.

First, while the milk is sold for as much as VND400,000 per 400-gram can, Manh Cam Co. stated in the receipt that it costs only VND115,000 a can.

Second, Danlait milk contains only 11 to 20 percent protein, which falls far behind

Vietnamese standard for this type of product, by which the protein content is required to be at least 34 percent. Moreover, Tran Quang Trung, Head of the Viet Nam Food Administration, said that his agency only certified the product as supplementary food product. However, Manh Cam labelled it as goat-milk baby formula. The mislabeling could seriously affect babies' health.

Finally, Manh Cam did not register the prices of its product with the relevant State authorities in Vietnam as required by law.

Several doubts were also raised as to the true origin of the product, because of its dubious website www.danlait.fr, which is said to be too simplistic and containing basic design mistakes. "There are no reasons for a website of a large French corporation to use Vietnamese language in the log in section for administrators. And several photo files on the website were saved in Vietnamese," a young Vietnamese mother said.

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3. Vietnam ranks third in rubber export

Vietnam's rubber output bounced up to 1.01 million tonnes in 2012, representing a volume increase of 23.8 percent from 2011, according to the Vietnam Rubber Association (VRA).

Recent efforts mean Vietnam has become the third largest exporter of natural rubber in the world after Thailand and Indonesia.

The Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC) previously forecast that Vietnam would produce 955,000 tonnes of rubber in 2012, and in doing so would replace Malaysia as the world's third biggest rubber producer.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam, by the end of 2012, the country had roughly 910,000ha of rubber plantation, accounting for seven percent of the total global rubber plantation area and surpassing the objective of 800,000ha in 2015. The yield of Vietnamese rubber trees now stand at 1.7 tonnes per ha, which is also the third highest worldwide.

Currently, products of the rubber sub-sector in Vietnam includes: rubber clone & rubber planting materials, latex concentrates, technically-specified rubber (mostly known as Standard Vietnam Rubber), rubber wood-based products, tyres & tubes, and non-tyre products, among which, SVR ones are the major product category.



Although Vietnam ranks the third in exporting natural rubber, but it mainly exports semi-products. At present, the production capacity of the Vietnam Rubber Group (the State Company of the rubber industry) only occupies around one-third of the total production capacity. The remaining is from private companies and small-holdings.

The standard system for producing rubber (technical specified rubber, field latex, and centrifuged latex) has been quite comprehensive. The industry standards applied for those products of the Vietnam Rubber Group (VRG) are compatible

with the national standards, and sometimes the industry standards have surpassed the national standards in terms of quality. Only ribbed smoked sheet does not have a uniform standard for its products. However, VRG is following the Green Book – specifying standard for ribbed smoked sheet products applied in many countries in the world – for qualifying this category of products.

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