




**Indiana State
Department of Health**
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Governor

Gregory N. Larkin, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.
State Health Commissioner

DATE: August 25, 2011

TO: All Local Health Departments
Attn: Chief Food Inspection Officer

FROM: 
A. Scott Gilliam, MBA, CP-FS
Director, Food Protection Program

SUBJECT: FDA News Release on imported papayas

SUGGESTED ACTION: Information provided in case of consumer inquiry.

FDA NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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Consumer Inquiries: 888-INFO-FDA

FDA working with Mexico to protect safety of imported papayas

Joint effort to find sources of contamination and improve food safety systems is broadened

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and its counterpart agencies in the Mexican government, the National Service for Agroalimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (SENASICA) and the Federal Commission for the Protection against Sanitary Risks (COFEPRIS), are expanding their collaboration to reduce the risk of contamination of food that moves across the U.S.-Mexican border. This new level of collaboration has added importance as papayas from Mexico have been linked to approximately 100 cases of Salmonella Agona in 23 U.S. states.

U.S. and Mexican officials have been working closely together to find the source or sources of contamination of Salmonella in fresh papayas entering the U.S. from Mexico. From May 12, 2011, to August 18, 2011, FDA analysis found a 15.6 percent Salmonella contamination rate. The positive samples were from 28 different firms and include nearly all the major papaya producing regions in Mexico.

Now, under an [FDA Import Alert issued today](#)¹, papayas from each source in Mexico may be denied admission into the United States unless the importer shows they are not contaminated with Salmonella, such as by using private laboratories to test the papayas. FDA may consider five consecutive commercial shipments over a period of time, analyzed from a validated laboratory, as being adequate for removal from the Import Alert.

Simultaneously, FDA and Mexican officials are stepping up their joint effort to trace recent contamination incidents back to their source and discover their cause or causes, in order to inform future prevention

strategies. FDA and Mexican officials also are collaborating on laboratory methodologies used in Mexico for testing fresh papayas for Salmonella.

Beyond these immediate steps, the Mexican government and papaya industry have agreed to a longer range action plan that will define proper food safety procedures throughout the chain of production and distribution in Mexico and verify that the procedures are working effectively through product testing and other government oversight. Mexican officials are overseeing the industry's implementation of the action plan and the FDA is collaborating with the Mexican government in this effort.

“Collaboration between FDA and the Mexican government in the management of food safety problems is essential to fulfilling our responsibility to consumers in our respective countries,” said Michael R. Taylor, FDA deputy commissioner for foods. “It is equally important that we work together to prevent problems in the first place by implementing sound measures to prevent contamination throughout the chain of production, processing, distribution and sale. FDA is committed to a strong food safety partnership with Mexico.”

“I am confident that this joint effort will reduce the risk of contamination of produce moving across our common border,” said Enrique Sanchez Cruz, director in chief of SENASICA. “The strategy we have adopted in this case is aligned very well with the strategy undertaken by the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) for papayas.”

The FDA has also been working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health and regulatory officials, including those in Texas and Illinois. On July, 23, 2011, Agromod Produce, Inc. of McAllen, Texas, voluntarily recalled its papayas after FDA found the outbreak strain in samples of Agromod papayas.

Under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, signed into law in January 2011, the FDA is developing a proposed rule for the safe production, and harvesting of both domestic and imported produce. The proposed rule is expected to be released by early 2012. In addition, a proposed rule for preventive controls for food facilities required to register with FDA is expected in late 2011.

The FDA, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, protects the public health by assuring the safety, effectiveness, and security of human and veterinary drugs, vaccines and other biological products for human use, and medical devices. The agency also is responsible for the safety and security of our nation's food supply, cosmetics, dietary supplements, products that give off electronic radiation, and for regulating tobacco products.

For more information:

[FDA Consumer Update on import alerts²](#)

[FDA press release on Agromod recall³](#)

[FDA produce safety activities](#)

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[CDC page on Salmonella Agona outbreak](#)

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[FoodSafety.gov on Salmonella⁶](#)

[Spanish language version of this FDA press release⁷](#)