



pure salmon campaign

RAISING THE STANDARDS FOR FARM-RAISED FISH

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Dear Ms. Waterman:

On 19 December 2006 the UK Food Standards Agency issued an alert warning that a sample of Findus frozen salmon skewers had tested positive for the chemical dye crystal violet — a substance that the agency notes, “has been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals following long term exposure at high levels.”

Despite the subsequent recall, however, there are two troubling issues attending the recent detection of the carcinogen crystal violet in salmon products bearing the Findus label and purveyed by Tesco and Farm Foods in the UK that the Pure Salmon Campaign would like to direct your attention to.

First, there remains a serious, and unanswered, question as to the origin of this contaminated salmon. On 20 December 2006, the UK Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) — in response to an inquiry as to the origin and nature of the contaminated salmon — informed the Pure Salmon Campaign that: “The country of origin is Chile and the packaging states that the fish is farmed salmon.”

A subsequent email from Dawn Greener with the VMD on December 21 clarified this information further stating that: “I can confirm that I received e-mail confirmation yesterday from Findus UK that the country of origin of the salmon was Chile. The information we have is that the salmon was farmed in Chile, part processed in Thailand and then freighted to the UK. ”

This understanding was corroborated in a 2nd January 2007 email from Michelle Waterman of Tesco UK, who participated in the actual product recall, noting that: “My understanding is that it was Chilean product affected.”

In contrast, however, SalmonChile on December 22 issued a statement refuting this information alleging that: “Companies producing salmon in Chile have never used the product crystal violet at any part of their production chain.” Or in the original Spanish: “Las empresas productoras de salmón de Chile nunca han utilizado el producto cristal violeta, en ninguna parte de su cadena productiva.” (See attached statement in full.)

While it may be possible that the toxin entered the salmon outside of Chile, such as during processing in Thailand, SalmonChile, nevertheless, insists that the toxin is not used in “any part of their production chain,” which on its face, would appear to include processing both inside and outside of Chile.

This is a serious conflict in assertions which remains unanswered to this day.

Second, the Pure Salmon Campaign has vigorously queried authorities as to the origin of the toxin. We have engaged experts skilled in government inquiry, toxicology and veterinary medicine from the United States, Chile and UK to assist in this investigation. Yet, despite these efforts we have been unable to determine a definitive answer.

The Pure Salmon Campaign believes that traceability and transparency should be of the utmost importance in the production of farmed salmon. We are deeply disturbed that a group of experts, bringing qualifications to bear on this question far above the average of UK consumers, have found questions about the origin of a common product sold in a major grocery store so difficult to answer.

Therefore, in light of these issues the Pure Salmon Campaign would request your assistance in answering the following questions:

Findus AB quality and control manager Inger Larsson, which supplied the skewer products to Findus Ltd. as part of a licensing agreement between the two companies, told IntraFish in an interview that her company is now investigating how the substance came to be found in the salmon. Further, according to Larsson, Findus is also testing other batches of the salmon skewers to determine if any other products were affected.

The Pure Salmon Campaign would like to know what procedures uncovered the toxin? The UK Food Standards Agency says that its action was based on a “sample.” Is it possible that the problem is more widespread? And if so, what investigations are underway to explore this possibility?

The integrity of this commodity industry is in question. If SalmonChile is correct, it should and must demand a full investigation by UK authorities as to the actual origin of the product. Once the true origin is determined, public apologies must be published. Systems also must be reformed so as to prevent such misinformation in the future.

Likewise, if UK authorities are correct, SalmonChile should and must issue a similar public apology. Further, it must establish an unimpeachable regulatory systems to ensure that such toxins are not used again.

While the motivation for salmon farmers to use chemicals in an effort to control disease and pests may be common in the aquaculture industry, the Pure Salmon Campaign feels strongly that the systematic deployment of banned substances is utterly indefensible in the name of profitability.

We thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to working with you in an effort to resolve the above noted questions. Please feel free to contact us at anytime with any subsequent questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

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The Pure Salmon Campaign is an international coalition consisting of organizations from Chile, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Norway, the European Union and the United States all working to reform the farmed salmon industry.