

HK recalls frozen meat imported from Brazilian plants

China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) decided to recall all the frozen and chilled meat and poultry imported from the 21 Brazilian plants that are under investigation for a massive meat adulteration scheme, the food safety authority said Friday.

The Center for Food Safety (CFS) of Hong Kong's Food and Environmental Hygiene Department made the decision "in view of a notification from the Brazilian authorities today that the country will extend its scope of export ban to the 21 plants which are under investigation," it said.

According to information gathered by the CFS so far, among the 21 plants, six of them were involved in the import licenses issued by the CFS in the past six weeks. The CFS will liaise with local importers to follow up on the recall, it said.

The Brazilian police uncovered last week a massive meat adulteration scheme involving some of the country's largest meat producers. According to the police, the adulterated meat was sold in the domestic market as well as exported. The Brazilian authorities later imposed an export ban on 21 plants.

The CFS announce Tuesday an import ban on all the frozen and chilled meat and poultry from Brazil as a "precautionary measure."

It said Friday that the temporary import suspension will be maintained. Once the Brazilian authorities provide more detailed information, the CFS will conduct further risk assessment and suitably review its follow-up actions, including narrowing the scope of the import ban.

As for meat and poultry that has been shipped from Brazil prior to the import ban but has not yet arrived in Hong Kong, the CFS will also make special arrangements, marking and sealing the products upon their arrival for proper handling after the completion of the relevant investigation.

Ko Wing-man, secretary for food and health of the Hong Kong SAR government, said Friday that the recall is with an immediate effect, calling on meat importers and dealers in Hong Kong to cooperate with the CFS to reassure consumers.

"We are keeping in close contact with the Consulate General of Brazil in Hong Kong," Ko said, adding that once the Brazilian authorities confirm the scandal only involves the 21 plants, the scope of Hong Kong's import ban could be narrowed down.