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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Hong Kong

Post: Hong Kong

Hong Kong Prohibits Cannabis and THC in Food and Drinks

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the Economy

Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

Hong Kong has a zero tolerance policy for cannabis and tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) in food and drinks. Any person bringing food and drink products that contain cannabis or THC into Hong Kong is liable for prosecution.

Hong Kong has a zero tolerance policy for cannabis and tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) in food and drinks. The Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department recently issued a press release reminding Hong Kong people that cannabis and THC are classified as dangerous drugs controlled under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap.134). Any products, including food products and drinks, that contain cannabis or THC are also controlled under Cap. 134.

The Hong Kong government's warning message was prompted by the legalization of recreational cannabis in Canada and the late 2018 seizure of a transshipment seaborne consignment of 267 kilograms of Juicy Wrap suspected of containing THC with an estimated market value of about HK\$1.5 million (US\$192,802). The consignment originated in the Philippines and was en route to Canada.

With the legalization of recreational cannabis in certain markets, food and drink products containing THC may be permissible in those markets. However, they are not permissible in Hong Kong. As such, echoing the Customs and Excise Department's press release, the Hong Kong food safety authority reminded traders at a recent forum that food and drink products containing THC are subject to not only food regulations, but also the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance.

According to the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, people importing to and exporting from Hong Kong, procuring, supplying, manufacturing, or dealing in or with dangerous drugs are subject to criminal offenses. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment or a fine of HK\$5 million (USD642,670).

While cannabidiol (CBD) is another cannabinoid present in cannabis plants, it is not a dangerous drug controlled under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. However, the Hong Kong food safety authority warned traders not to bring in food or drinks containing CBD because it is difficult to extract pure CBD that does not contain any THC. Bringing in food and drinks containing any ingredients classified as a dangerous drug controlled under Cap.134, such as THC, constitutes a criminal offense and violates Hong Kong law.