

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: August 14,2020

Report Number: HK2020-0039

Report Name: Hong Kong Banned Imports from a Brazilian Poultry Plant due to Coronavirus

Country: Hong Kong

Post: Hong Kong

Report Category: Agriculture in the News, Poultry and Products, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Prepared By: Caroline Yuen

Approved By: Alicia Hernandez

Report Highlights:

Following China's detection that a surface sample of chicken wings imported from Brazil tested positive for coronavirus, the Hong Kong government has suspended the license application for products originating from the Brazilian plant in question effective August 13, 2020.

Subsequent to the Shenzhen authority's detection of coronavirus on a surface sample of chicken wings imported from Brazil, the Hong Kong government's preliminary investigation showed that the concerned batch of chicken wings was not on sale in Hong Kong. They assured the public that, as a precautionary measure, they have immediately enhanced sampling of frozen chicken meat from Brazil at import and wholesale levels for testing of the coronavirus and suspended the license application for the import of poultry meat into Hong Kong from the plant concerned. (The plant is eligible to export only poultry products to Hong Kong.)

A spokesman for the Hong Kong Center for Food Safety (CFS) maintained that there is no evidence indicating the transmission of coronavirus to humans via food, while reminding the public to use proper hygiene when handling food. It seems that the Hong Kong food authority has not overreacted to the incident. Given that the batch in question is not available in Hong Kong, CFS has not issued a voluntary recall of products from the plant. The ban does not extend to other Brazilian meat plants either. Currently, around 400 Brazilian plants are eligible to export meat products to Hong Kong. No further action is expected unless testing of more Brazilian products reveals additional cases of the virus.

Market Reaction

The plant in question is eligible to sell only poultry products to Hong Kong and an industry representative indicated that products from this company are readily available in Hong Kong. In light of the CFS' announcement of the ban on this plant, a major online platform voluntarily withdrew the plant's products from the shelf despite the fact that the CFS has not initiated any related food recalls. However, some other small retailers continue to sell products from this specific plant because they say the products are from different batches.

Although the ban is restricted to only one Brazilian plant, a trader interviewed indicated that he has been buying Brazilian chicken products, but he will begin to source supplies from France fearing that products from other Brazilian plants could be found to be contaminated with coronavirus as well.

Brazil is the third-largest poultry supplier to Hong Kong. Hong Kong's poultry imports from Brazil amounted to USD306 million in 2019, falling behind China (USD486 million) and United States (USD349 million), respectively. Frozen meats have sold well since the pandemic arrived in Hong Kong in January 2020 because more people are buying online and purchasing frozen meats, which have a longer shelf life.

Attachments:

No Attachments.