



AV (HS) 1617

29 January 2007

Food Traders

Dear Sir/Mdm

POTENTIAL HEALTH ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH CONSUMPTION OF ESCOLAR AND OILFISH

The purpose of this circular is to inform you that fish known as Escolar (*Lepidocybium flavobrunneum*) and Oilfish (*Ruvettus pretiosus*) has been mislabelled and sold as codfish or other common names and also the potential health consequences of people consuming these fish. The fish is commonly known as oilfish, butterfish, black oilfish or gemfish and should be correctly labelled and prepared.

It is likely that many food business owners are unaware of the potential health consequences of consuming Escolar and Oilfish. The fish has a high content of indigestible wax ester oil. If the fish is not prepared properly and/or eaten in large quantities, it could cause stomach cramps and diarrhoea in some consumers. Additional symptoms such as, headache, nausea and vomiting may also appear within 3 to 12 hours after eating the fish. However, these effects are usually short-lived. The appropriate cooking method is by grilling, which will reduce the heavy fat content in the fish.

It is, therefore, important for importers and retailers of fish to use acceptable common names for the fish so that consumers will be informed of the type of fish they are getting. People could then decide if they are buying.

We would like to remind all importers and businesses to use the proper common name when making declaration of fish imported into Singapore and selling the fish. The common name of the fish should correspond with the scientific name of the species. Use of incorrect common names for fish imported or sold in Singapore constitutes mislabelling of the product, which is an offence under the Food Regulations.

Yours faithfully

CHUA LAY HAR (MS)
IMPORT & EXPORT DIVISION
For DIRECTOR-GENERAL
AGRI-FOOD AND VETERINARY SERVICES

This is a computer-generated letter and no signature is required.