



AV (HS) 1617

26 May 2008

Food Traders

Dear Sir/Mdm

FOOD SAFETY ADVISORY ON THE POTENTIAL HEALTH ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH CONSUMPTION OF ESCOLAR AND OILFISH

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority had informed you back in 29 January 2007 that the fish known as Escolar (*Lepidocybium flavobrunneum*) and Oilfish (*Ruvettus pretiosus*) have been commonly mislabelled and sold as codfish, butterfish or other common names and also on the potential health consequences on people, associated with the consumption of the Escolar and Oilfish.

Recently, we have received several feedbacks on the mislabelling of escolar and oilfish. In view of this, we would like to bring this matter to your attention again.

It is likely that many food business owners are unaware of the potential health consequences of consuming Escolar and Oilfish. Both these fish have a high content of indigestible wax ester oil. If they are not prepared properly and/or eaten in large quantities, they could cause stomach cramps and diarrhoea in some consumers. Additional symptoms in an affected person may also appear within 3 to 12 hours after eating the fish, which include headache, nausea and vomiting. The illness may be more severe in older people and those with an existing bowel condition. The appropriate cooking method is by grilling, which will reduce the heavy fat content in the fish.

It is, therefore, important for importers, retailers and food outlet/restaurant owners to use acceptable common names for the fish so that consumers are well informed of the type of fish they are getting. People in the risk category could then decide if they would want to buy/consume the fish.

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.