

900kg of tainted vegetables destroyed, says AVA

THE Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) has destroyed 900kg of vegetables tainted with an insecticide between last year and last month.

These were coriander, chillies and long beans from Malaysia and Thailand which it found contained Carbofuran, commonly marketed as Furadan.

There were no fruit among the destroyed consignments.

The AVA released this information in response to a letter by Straits Times reader Philip Lee, who wrote to the newspaper's Forum page asking whether the AVA or the Health Sciences Authority tested for Carbofuran in the fruit and vegetables imported into Singapore.

He wrote that a warning had been circulating on the Internet that traces of this insecticide have been found in fruit like watermelons and bananas.

In response to queries from The Straits Times, the AVA said it was aware of this warning making the rounds on the Internet.

Its spokesman Goh Shih Yong said: **"All fresh fruit and vegetables imported into Singapore are subject to AVA's screening tests for food safety. The laboratory analysis covers a wide range of pesticides and fungicides, and Furadan is one of them."**

Farmers use Furadan to prepare the soil for farming, ahead of sowing. This is so, when harvest rolls around, enough time would have lapsed for the insecticide to have broken down to safe levels.

However, the product has been red-flagged in places like Europe and the United States as toxic to humans, wildlife and the environment, but it is still used in Asia, Australia and South America.

Last year, Singapore imported more than 400,000 tonnes of vegetables and more than 350,000 tonnes of fruit from countries such as China, Malaysia and Australia.



Shoppers said they were not worried about the bacterial outbreak, which originated in Germany and spread through tainted vegetables. It has killed 31 people and made over 3,000 sick, with most of the victims in Germany and Spain. ST FILE PHOTO

Mr Goh said the AVA inspects all consignments imported into the country for pathogens, contaminants and residues to ensure they are safe for consumption.

High-risk foods like meat must come from AVA-approved farms and pass certain tests before they can be brought in.

He added that the AVA keeps a high level of vigilance on the global food-safety situation to monitor and identify potential food issues or health threats, and steps up its checks accordingly.

Source: The Straits Times 17/09/2010 by Kimberley Spykerman