



FOOD SAFETY ADVISORY

The Belize Agricultural Health Authority, The Ministry of Health and the Consumer Protection Unit of the Belize Bureau of Standards Advises Consumers that Peanut Butter Products Originating from United States and offered for sale in Belize May be Contaminated with *Salmonella*.

Belize City, January 20th, 2009

The Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Consumer Protection Unit of the Belize Bureau of Standards hereby informs the public of an alert issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States of America advising consumers of possible contamination of peanut butter products, originating from the United States.

The FDA reported over the week of January 12th 2009 an outbreak of *Salmonella Typhimurium* in peanut butter used as an ingredient in cookies, crackers, cakes or ice cream. As of Friday January 16th 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated that public health authorities reported that 474 persons had been infected in 43 of the 50 U.S. states. Twenty-three percent (23%) of the known cases had resulted in hospitalizations and the infections may have contributed to six (6) deaths.

Salmonella is a bacterial organism which can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in young children, frail or elderly people, and others with weakened immune systems. Healthy persons infected with *Salmonella* often experience fever, diarrhea (which may be bloody), nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. In rare circumstances, infection with *Salmonella* can result in the organism getting into the bloodstream and producing more severe illnesses such as arterial infections (i.e., infected aneurysms), endocarditis and arthritis.

The FDA along with the Centers for Disease Control has traced sources of *Salmonella Typhimurium* contamination to a plant in Georgia, owned by **Peanut Corporation of America (PCA)** which manufactures peanut butter and peanut paste, a concentrated product consisting of ground, roasted peanuts, that are both distributed to food manufacturers to be used as an ingredient in many commercially produced products. PCA does not sell peanut butter directly to consumers but only sells peanut butter to institutions and food manufacturers (some of which use it as an ingredient in other processed/packaged foods). Some major food manufacturers use PCA peanut butter or peanut paste in baked or processed foods, such as crackers and cookies, cakes or ice cream to name a few. All these manufacturers including the Kellogg Company and Mckee Foods Corporation have initiated a voluntary recall of all their products processed using peanut butter from PCA. **At this time, there is no indication that any national name brand jars of peanut butter sold in retail stores have been affected.**

Since the extent of the contamination is yet to be known and products from the abovementioned major food manufacturers have been traditionally imported into Belize, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority is checking its import databases to investigate the range of products imported from the identified suspected source(s).

On January 18, 2009 PCA expanded its previous voluntary recall to include more products and lot numbers (**see list attached**) relating to peanut butter and peanut paste products manufactured on or after July 1, 2008, at its Blakely, Georgia plant because of potential *Salmonella* contamination. Based on this information, and on the current state of the investigation, the regulatory authorities in Belize and the FDA recommends that consumers avoid eating products that have been recalled and discard them.

As of January 20th 2009, one package of *Austin®* Quality Foods Toasty Crackers with Peanut Butter (all sizes), one of the brands on the list of recalled products has tested positive with *Salmonella*. This brand