



FOOD SAFETY ADVISORY Update No 1

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, February 2nd 2009

Update on the event

As of 28 January 2009, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the United States of America reports that the outbreak of *Salmonella typhimurium* has affected 529 persons in 43 states. At present INFOSAN, the Food Safety Authority Network of which Belize is member of, is unaware of any cases of human disease related to this outbreak outside the United States, except for one patient in Canada, who bought a suspected food product in the United States. A total of 116 patients were reported hospitalized, and the infection might have contributed to eight (8) 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.

According to the US FDA and CDC epidemiological analysis and laboratory testing, the sources of the outbreak of illnesses caused by *Salmonella typhimurium* are peanut butter and peanut paste produced by the Peanut Corporation of America (PCA) at its processing plant in the state of Georgia, US. These products are being used by more than 100 consignee firms as an ingredient in hundreds of different products. PCA and companies that received and used the affected products have initiated a recall. The investigation is still on-going and new product recalls are still being initiated as it becomes known that additional products may have been affected by the recalled PCA product.

Through 28 January, information is available that show that **26 countries** have received food products that has been recalled by PCA or recalled by companies whose products contain recalled PCA ingredients. There has also been one case of a dog being infected from a dog treat. Although Belize is not included in this list provided by the FDA, investigation by the Belize Agricultural Health Authority has determined that a few products included in the recall has been previously imported into Belize. These products have been taken off the market by BAHA and its regulatory partners of the Ministry of Health and the Consumer Protection Unit of the Belize Bureau of Standards. Please note also that at this time, **there is no indication that any national name brand jars of peanut butter sold in retail stores have been affected.** The Belize Agricultural Health Authority will continue to regulate all importations of peanut butter products from affected companies to verify its origin and safety. Regular updates will be provided as needed.

For updates on the current recall including an updated list of recalled products consumers or interested parties can visit: <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/salmonellatyph.html>. An amendment to the original list was issued on February 5, 2009.

Consumers who have questions should contact BAHA's Food Safety Services at 224 4704 or 222 4457