

10 sick in another food safety scare

THE MALAY MAIL 2/01/08 M/S 16

TOKYO: Japanese food companies recalled foods sourced from a factory in China yesterday after dumplings contaminated with pesticide sickened 10 people in the latest safety scare involving Chinese products.

Japan Tobacco Inc said its subsidiary, JT Foods Co., would recall the frozen dumplings and other food made at the same Chinese factory, as television broadcasters flashed warnings to viewers not to eat the products.

"If anyone has the product, we ask you not to eat it and to send it back to us," said Mutsuo Iwai, Japan Tobacco's executive vice-president.

The dumplings are distributed by JT Foods under the 'JT' and 'CO-OP' brand names only in Japan, though the company was unaware if the factory in China exported food to other countries.

A family of five that ate the dumplings was still in hospital, including a five-year-old girl who had been in critical condition, a health ministry official said.

China was hit by a series of food safety scares last year, though officials have said they are adopting new technology and tighter laws to try to ensure safe food at home and in exports.

Police found pesticide in the dumplings

though it was not clear whether the dish, popular with children, had been contaminated with the chemicals in China or in Japan, the official said.

"We have sent information to China and we are asking for their co-operation in investigating the situation," he said.

Asked how the Japanese government would deal with the situation, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda said: "I feel sorry for those who have been affected," and added that relevant ministries would tackle the problem.

Japan has not been immune to its own food scares. A number of Japanese confectioners admitted last year to having mislabelled production and expiry dates for cookies and rice cakes.

No widespread health hazards, however, have hit the country since more than 10,000 people suffered food poisoning after drinking tainted milk in 2000.

A spokesman for Japan Tobacco, the world's third-largest cigarette maker, declined to comment on how the recall would impact on its food business, which accounts for only about 5 per cent of the company's sales.

The recalled products are worth 2.4 billion yen (RM7.12 million) in annual sales, she said. The former State monopoly has been trying to reduce its dependence on domestic tobacco sales and sees its food business as one driver of future growth. — Reuters



RECALLED: Chinese-made frozen dumplings were removed at a supermarket in Osaka following news that 10 people fell sick after eating dumplings contaminated with insecticide yesterday