

Contamination of Chinese Wheat Gluten Widespread Dingell, Stupak Dispatch Investigators to West Coast Ports

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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

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The Committee's investigation of contaminated pet food and the discovery of melamine contamination of wheat gluten imported from China were examined in a hearing on food safety held by the committee last week. The hearing

brought to light serious shortcomings in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) inspection and regulation of food imported from China.

Last week's hearing brought immediate action from the FDA:

- On April 25th, the FDA determined that Chinese wheat gluten had been contaminated with cyanuric acid, in addition to melamine.

- On April 26th, the FDA opened a criminal investigation focusing on the contaminated Chinese wheat gluten and rice protein, and searched importers' offices and warehouses.

- On April 27th, the FDA issued an import alert (IA #99-29) ordering the immediate embargo of all vegetable protein from China, whether intended for human or animal food.

"The FDA's embargo of Chinese vegetable protein is a good first step toward forcing proper control of these food products at their source," said Dingell. "We are dispatching investigators to the west coast immediately to examine the extent and depth of the FDA's commitment to inspection of these products from China."

Stupak emphasized that this is just the beginning of the Committee's investigation. "The FDA should have taken this action weeks ago. Our Committee will continue to monitor this situation and will continue to pressure the FDA to properly address the food safety problems that have plagued our country in recent months."

The Committee is holding a second hearing on food safety on May 17th, at which the FDA's food safety activities will be examined.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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