



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press Statement

24 August 2021

CAP: Don't be duped by fake meat

Lately Malaysians are being gobbled up by a meaty scandal. Many are rightfully livid, demanding justice be meted out to the unethical individuals who have been feeding Malaysians fake Halal meat that are not be Halal or may have been mixed with diseased kangaroo and horse meat.

But what is coming in the pipeline is even more shocking. **Impossible Foods**, the US-based fake meat maker that uses genetically engineered ingredients, has already managed to steer its fake meat **Impossible Burger** products to several countries such as the US, Canada and Singapore.

Fake meat is a plant-based alternative to real meat. It is made from plant sources of protein like soy or pea protein isolate. It is gaining popularity among those looking to reduce their meat consumption. For many consumers, fake meat appears to be a sustainable answer to eating meat which is both unhealthy and destroying our planet. Fake meat however is a bad substitute as it is not only nutritionally deficient but it also contains harmful ingredients.

Fake meat is sold in patty form or in packages similar to real meat. In overseas countries fake meat has been introduced as a plant-based alternative at major restaurant chains like *Burger King* and *Subway*.

The creators of various fake meat companies want to offer a non-meat burger that looks, bleeds, cooks, and tastes like real meat which seems to be an easy swap to a meatless lifestyle. But in reality fake meat is an ultra-processed imitation which contains high amounts of sodium and chemicals.

According to studies a fake meat product often contains 20 to 35 percent of the maximum recommended daily salt intake (RDI) (which is 5g salt or 2000mg of sodium) but it was found that a brand of fake meat contained 1100mg of sodium which is more than half of RDI.

A fake meat product may contain around 17-18 ingredients such as methylcellulose, potassium chloride, leghemoglobin and konjac gum.

However the ingredient that is of most concern is soy leghemoglobin the colouring additive that makes the product appear to “bleed” like real meat.

Leghemoglobin is short for legume hemoglobin or heme which is a protein found in the roots of leguminous plants (in this case soya beans) which gives fake meat a uniquely meaty flavour and the appearance of blood in the meat.

The purpose of adding soy leghemoglobin to meat analogue products is to replicate the nutrition (source of iron), flavour and aroma of myoglobin, oxygen transporting haem (or heme) protein.

Soy leghemoglobin does not have a history of safe use in food, in its natural state it exists in the roots of soybeans and has never been an integral part of the human diet.

Originally the manufacturer of fake meat harvested leghemoglobin from the roots of soy plants, but

deemed that method unsustainable. Instead, they turned to genetic engineering, which they use to insert the DNA from soy plants into yeast, creating genetically engineered (GE) yeast with the gene for soy leghemoglobin which has no history of safe use in food. Therefore, consumer safety following consumption of GMO-derived Soy leghemoglobin cannot be assured. This has prompted *Friends of the Earth Australia (FOE)* to call upon **Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)** to enforce stronger safety standards for this product.

Besides the presence of high amount of sodium and soy leghemoglobin fake meat also contains these chemicals:

- **Tertiary butylhydroquinone.** TBHQ is a synthetic preservative that prevents discoloration in processed foods. Studies of laboratory animals have found an association with TBHQ and cancer.
- **Magnesium carbonate.** Used in foods to retain color, is also used in flooring, fireproofing, and fire-extinguishing compounds.
- products such as cosmetics in 1990 after high doses of the substance were linked to cancer. But it is used in foods like fake meat.
- **Propylene glycol.** It is an odorless, colorless liquid used as a moisturizer. It's also used as a liquid in e-cigarettes and is the primary ingredient in antifreeze.
- **Ferric orthophosphate.** Also called iron phosphate, this chemical is used to fortify foods. It can also be used as a pesticide to kill slugs and snails. It is a skin and eye irritant and may cause an upset stomach.

Fake meat may seem like a dream come true for meat-conscious eaters, but it falls short of the hype. It is a processed product that is nutritionally inferior to real meat. The idea of eating less meat is a worthy one, but swapping it out for plant-based alternatives is not healthy as perceived. Consumers should not be duped into it.

In view of the potential harm that awaits the consumption of fake meat, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) calls on the authorities to prohibit the sale of fake meat.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers Association of Penang