

FairPlay urges enquiry into unsafe labelling of chicken imports

The FairPlay anti-dumping movement says it was dismayed to discover bulk packs of chicken for sale at a Makro store with a label claiming nine possible countries of origin. The discovery led FairPlay founder Francois Baird to email the Commissioner of the National Consumer Commission, Ebrahim Mohamed, appealing to him to launch an investigation into the labelling practices of frozen imported chicken that is being dumped in South Africa.



Citing concerns about food safety and traceability, Baird noted that this practice denies South African consumers the right to know which country or even which continent the chicken originated from. "In the event of illness or contamination, it would be impossible to trace this product back to the country, exporter or abattoir concerned," he writes. South African chicken producers, on the other hand, have to comply with strict health and safety regulations, which includes clear labels stating origin.

Dear Mr Mohamed,

Unsafe Labelling of Imported Chicken Portions in South Africa

South African consumers are being put at risk by the unsafe labelling of imported frozen chicken packs. I believe your Commission should act to prevent wholesalers and retailers from designating repackaged frozen packs as the product of multiple countries.

Attached is a photograph of a 3kg pack of imported chicken, purchased at Makro in Woodmead on 28 November 2017. As you will see, it is marked: 'Product of Netherlands and/or Germany and/or Argentina and/or Brazil and/or United Kingdom and/or France and/or Spain and/or Canada and/or United States.'

This small pack comes potentially from nine countries on three continents. This is dangerous from a food safety and traceability point of view. In the event of illness or contamination, it would be impossible to trace this product back to the country, exporter or abattoir concerned. It is also bad from a consumer information point of view, as the consumer cannot judge accurately which country, or even continent, the chicken comes from.

This is not the only instance we have come across of multi-country origins being given on imported chicken. These chicken portions are imported in frozen bulk packs and then repackaged, sometimes in unsafe conditions, for the local market. Please also see the following report in Farmers Weekly, detailing unsafe practices by importers, and containing another photograph of multi-country labelling on products sold in South African stores.

<https://www.farmersweekly.co.za/agri-news/south-%20africa/eu-blamed-%20for-local-%20poultry-labelling-mistakes/>

We understand this practice is not illegal, because there is a dispensation by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries which allows it. In the interests of consumer safety, this should not happen. You have the power to prevent it. I appeal to you to investigate and stop this practice.

Please would you let me know how your Commission proposes to proceed on this important public health issue?

Yours sincerely,

*Francois Baird,
Founder, FairPlay anti-dumping movement*

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