

Enterprise shuts two factories, says no link showing its products caused deaths

Enterprise Foods has withdrawn all ready-to-eat meat products and has closed the two factories manufacturing these products, its parent company Tiger Brands said on Monday.

By Ernest Mabuza And Nico Gous 6 Mar 2018



Customers queue to return meat to the Enterprise factory store in Germiston, east of Johannesburg, on 5 March 2018. Image: Alaister Russell/The Sunday Times

However, Lawrence MacDougall, CEO of Tiger Brands, said there was no direct correlation between their products and the 180 deaths caused by the listeriosis outbreak. MacDougall was briefing the media following the [announcement by the health department](#) on Sunday that the source of the present outbreak of listeria was the Enterprise food production facility in Polokwane, Limpopo.

MacDougall said although the National Consumer Commission ordered Enterprise Foods on Sunday to remove three products from the shelves, the company had decided to be extra vigilant and voluntarily recall all products produced in its facilities in Germiston, Gauteng, and Polokwane in Limpopo.

"Any loss of life is tragic. We are all concerned about the outbreak of listeriosis in our country and as the CEO of Tiger Brands it is devastating for me to have our products linked to this outbreak. Food safety remains our utmost priority at Enterprise Foods. We place consumers' health and safety above all else," MacDougall said.

He said the outbreak was confirmed in December by the department of health. The company said it had then introduced additional testing, over and above strict controls that were already in place, to test for listeria.



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Explaining the sequence of events, MacDougall said officials of the department of health and members of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases visited Enterprise Foods' Polokwane factory on 2 February and the delegation took 400 environmental swabs in the factory and nine product samples produced in the facility.

"At the same time we replicated the sampling on 3 February. All these results came back negative for our products,"

MacDougall said.

He said given amplified testing, the company detected low levels of listeria in one of its products on 14 February. He said the company quarantined all affected products and recalled all the products that had been dispatched to shops.

MacDougall said the company knew on Sunday that the department of health said it would announce the source of listeria. "At 12:35, we received a notification order from the National Consumer Commission to conduct a national recall of three products - Enterprise frankfurters, Enterprise smoked Russians and Enterprise polony."

He said immediate action was taken. "We immediately suspended operations at both Enterprise manufacturing facilities in Polokwane and in Germiston.

"We halted all supplies to retailers. We have set up a consumer helpline. We are engaging with customers " and retailers ensure that we are able to provide them with the support they require to remove the products from the shelves as a matter of priority."

He said the company would continue to undertake cleaning protocols in all its facilities. "We are being extra vigilant and cautious by withdrawing all products all products produced in those facilities."

MacDougall said the cost of the withdrawal was at the company's expense and that it was busy calculating the costs. He refused to take blame for the deaths that had been caused by listeriosis. "We have had no direct link yet between our products and the deaths."

Patrick Sithole, chief officer for supply chain at Tiger Brands, said products at the facilities were tested once a day, but would now test products every hour.

Enterprise Foods owns a 25% share of the country's processed meat trade. MacDougall said he last ate Enterprise Food products about six weeks ago.

Source: The Times

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