

Supermarkets named, shamed over meat

Popular supermarkets including Pick n Pay, Shoprite, Fruit and Veg City, Woolworths and Spar have been identified as stocking incorrectly labelled meat products, *City Press* reported on Sunday.



The newspaper reported that the retailers had largely suggested that the findings could be blamed on cross-contamination, where one type of meat was transferred to another on chopping boards, saws, hands and utensils.

Shoprite chief executive Whitey Basson told the newspaper there was not "intentional adulteration to mislead consumers".

A University of Stellenbosch study found that nearly 60% of 139 products tested contained ingredients which were not listed on their labels, including donkey, water buffalo, goat and pork.

Of 32 Shoprite and Checkers products tested, 20 were wrongly labelled.

Basson said some of the findings did not make sense.

"No butcher in his right mind would intentionally add a small percentage of lamb, which costs more per kilogram, to a pure beef sausage, which is cheaper."

Pick 'n Pay food director Peter Arnold said the quantities of undeclared animal products found in the Stellenbosch study were "minute".

He said there was an international threshold that meat could contain 1% of an undeclared product to allow cross-contamination.

Spar group merchandise executive Mike Prentice said labelling needed to be "tightened up" and the industry as a whole needed to "jack itself up".

Mislabelling commonplace

Louw Hoffman, the scientist behind the study, said it had proved that the mislabelling of processed meats was "commonplace" in South Africa.

"[The mislabelling] not only violates food-labelling regulations, but poses economic, religious, ethical and health impacts," he told *City Press*.

The study examined meat products sourced from shops in Gauteng, the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

Trade and Industry department spokesman Sidwell Medupe said an investigation into meat labelling was underway.

Democratic Alliance MP Annette Steyn said that in light of the meat label study, a food agency should be established which could inspect meat and other products and regulate and enforce certain codes of practice.

She said during a meeting last month between the portfolio committees of agriculture, forestry and fisheries health and trade and industry, an agreement "in principle" was reached to form such a food agency.

Steyn said in a statement that she would follow up what was happening in terms of implementing the agreement.

"The mislabelling of products not only has possible health implications, but it has the potential to undermine the reputation of South African exports and cost our economy jobs," she added.

Source: *Sapa* via I-Net Bridge

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