

Media Release

To: Editors & Health Journalists
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Statement on alleged sale of “Fake foods” in South Africa

The Department is noting with concern the food related videos that are circulating on social media about the alleged ‘unsafe’ manufacturing of certain fake foods in South Africa.

However, due to the high volume of complaints received by the Department in the past few days, we take these allegations seriously as potential for danger to human health.

While the authenticity of these videos cannot be verified, some cases are currently being investigated by the environmental health practitioners based in municipalities.

We have the responsibility to determine if there is truth to these allegations, and where necessary take urgent action against perpetrators.

The following are the examples of foodstuff that have surfaced from the social media and described as fake, harmful food colourants and which expired:

Fake eggs being manufactured; fake eggs being cooked; fake plastic rice and fish; fake beef; fake mutton; coke 1,25L with some moving things inside; Fanta grape 1,25L label; Stony ginger beer no size indicated; Fanta orange 1,25L; twist granadilla 2L; tonic water 1L; Valpre Spring water; Albany brown bread and Blue Band margarine; syrup being sold as honey; baked beans in a fish tin etc.

Foodborne disease outbreaks in South Africa are typically caused by food contaminated with bacteria, viruses or parasites and harmful colourants. Sudan Red dye colourant is prohibited for use in foods products in South Africa, as per the Regulations Relating to Food Colorants (R.1008) of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectant Act 54 of 1972. Special sampling run for this colourant targeting certain products is being conducted.

The Ministry of Health views these allegations as serious and has instructed provinces and municipalities to investigate all these claims. Municipalities have embarked on special blitzes to inspect foodstuff sold mainly in townships’ outlets. This is a special operation over and above the normal routine monitoring done by Environmental Health Practitioners (health inspectors).

The food industry has also been requested to confirm the authenticity of the potential counterfeit foodstuffs which include verifying the brands of their products such as soft drinks, tinned foodstuffs, etc. currently displayed on social media platforms.

The Department is working in partnership with other Government regulatory authorities from Agriculture and Trade and Industry including the National Consumer Commission, to confirm allegations of compromised quality standards.

The public is encouraged to notify environmental health practitioners and the South African Police Services regarding any suspicious foodstuffs and provide evidence where possible.

To date, the Ministry of Health has received **no** reports or notifications of human illness associated with such ‘fake’ food products doing rounds on social media.

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