

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT



Greenyard recalling products in 80 countries after reports of nine listeria deaths

The Belgian vegetable company Greenyard has ended up in the eye of a storm after reports of nine deaths over the past three years in Europe. The deaths were caused by a listeria infection in frozen foods which allegedly started in a Hungarian plant of Greenyard. The company is recalling products in dozens of countries.

Michaël Torfs
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Over the past weeks, Greenyard Factory had announced various recalls of frozen vegetables due to potential listeria contamination of frozen goods at its Hungary facility in Baja.

The products involved included frozen corn, peas, beans, spinach and sorrel. Yesterday, the company ended up in the eye of the storm after a link was being established between Greenyard and nine listeria deaths across Europe by the press. Shares at the stock market plunged, with trade being suspended after the shares had lost almost 10 percent.

In Belgium, Greenyard products were taken from the shelves in a number of stores including Delhaize and Colruyt. The Belgian food safety agency FAVV published a list of potentially contaminated products, click here to consult the list <<http://www.favv-afsca.be/productterugroepingen/2018/2018-07-12b.asp>> .

Greenyard advises members of the public to cook the products, in order to eliminate the risks. It's enough to heat the product to 70 Celsius for two minutes to kill the potential listeria bacteria. Customers who bought frozen foods from the above list, can get a refund in the store.

“Trade in Greenyard shares had to be suspended after reports of nine listeria deaths which may be linked to the company

The nine deaths were reported in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Austria. At the same time, at least 38 people got ill. The type of listeria bacteria found in the victims, matches the one found at Greenyard's Hungarian plant. The plant was closed and is being disinfected.

Greenyard is focusing on recalling possibly contaminated products at present, but is bound to suffer heavy financial consequences. The Hungary plant boasted an annual turnover of 24 million euros. The total turnover of the Sint-Katelijne-Waver-based business was about 4.2 billion last year.

Greenyard underlines that while the two listeria stems are matching, this does not necessarily mean that they are actually responsible. In a statement, they said that "further research is needed. There is no link between the cases at present, but despite this we are taking extra measures to guarantee food safety."

“More research is needed before linking the contamination

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- Deblackening:** Electrochemically removing surface contaminations in order to avoid black coloration of food/pharma products.
- Pickling/Passivation:** Removal of weld-coloration and Fe-contaminations.
- Glass-blasting:** Bead blasting of surface using "inert" media.
- Non-stick finish:** Combination of treatments in function of applications.
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