



GOVERNMENT OF GUAM

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIPATTAMENTON SALUT PUPBLEKO YAN SETBISION SUSIAT



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Public Advisory on Pesticide Residues on Vegetables

As part of its regulatory activity in protecting the public from potentially unsafe foods, the Division of Environmental Health of the Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) has been testing fruits and vegetables for residual pesticide. The most recent batch tested by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on behalf of this Department, included one vegetable that revealed the presence of a residual pesticide that is not authorized for use. The remaining eight types of produce either did not have any residual pesticide present or the levels of residue were within acceptable ranges.

The vegetable found with the unauthorized pesticide was a sample of green long-beans (*Vigna unguiculata sesquipedalis*), commonly known as frioles (Chamorro) or sitaw (Filipino). It was contaminated with the pesticide, permethrin, which is not approved for use on this particular vegetable.

Permethrin is a restricted use pesticide for crop and wide area applications (i.e., nurseries, sod farms) due to its high toxicity to aquatic organisms, except for wide area mosquito adulticide use. It is a general use pesticide for residential and industrial applications. Permethrin is registered for use on/in numerous food/feed crops, livestock and livestock housing, modes of transportation, structures, buildings (including food handling establishments), Public Health mosquito abatement programs, and numerous residential use sites including use in outdoor and indoor spaces, pets, and clothing.

Locally, pesticides are regulated by the Guam Environmental Protection Agency (GEPA), but residual pesticide on agricultural food products is the responsibility of DPHSS. Under the law, any food with a pesticide level above the tolerance level established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or found to contain any level of unapproved pesticide, is deemed adulterated and cannot be sold.

As a result of the finding, this Department is working closely with GEPA and the Department of Agriculture in its investigation. Because two months have passed between the initial sampling of the long beans and the receipt of the laboratory analysis, the contaminated long beans are no longer present at retail facilities.

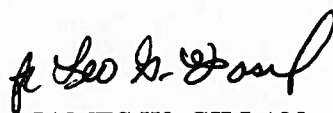
This Department would like to remind the public to regularly wash hands after handling raw agricultural commodities that may be tainted with unnecessary levels of residual pesticide.

DPHSS further recommends the following to the public:

- Wash fruits and vegetables using large amounts of cold or warm tap water (with no soap or other detergents) before serving. Washing will help remove pesticide residues, dirt, and microorganisms that may be on the surface of these foods. Scrub with a brush when appropriate for produce with firm skin or hard rind.
- Throw away outer leaves of leafy vegetables, such as lettuce and cabbage.
- Peeling and discarding outer skin or rinds of some produce is an option since some pesticides are absorbed into the plant.
- Always wash squash and melons since dirt or bacteria, and possibly residual pesticide, on the surface can be transferred to the inner flesh during cutting.
- If cooking fruits and vegetables; do so thoroughly. Cooking can break down some pesticide residues because they tend to be heat sensitive.
- Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables can limit exposure to any one type of pesticide residue.

DPHSS wishes to emphasize that while ingestion of minute concentrations of pesticide can occur during consumption of commercially and homegrown fruits and vegetables, the benefits of eating these foods outweigh the potential risks, so the public is encouraged to follow the recommendations provided.

For further inquiry into this matter, the Division of Environmental Health of DPHSS may be contacted at 735-7221. Dangkolo Na Si Yu'us Ma'ase!



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Director