

Food Safety fines New Zealand Sugar Company for importing and selling sugar products contaminated with lead

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New Zealand Sugar Company, trading as Chelsea Sugar, has been fined \$149,500 for manufacturing, distributing and selling sugar products contaminated with lead.

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Two other product recalls were needed when it was later discovered New Zealand Sugar Company provided incorrect information to supermarkets, resulting in more sugar products being released to consumers.

"These recalls had a significant impact on consumer access to certain sugar products, such as brown sugar. It also affected a large number of other businesses which had to recall products made with the contaminated sugar," says Vincent Arbuckle, New Zealand Food Safety Deputy Director General.

In the Auckland District Court, the company was sentenced on 2 charges it pleaded guilty to in May last year, including breaching its National Programme (NP) – designed to manage any food risk to consumers – along with negligently endangering, harming, creating, or increasing risk to consumers by distributing its product.

A sentencing hearing was held in September last year and the court has released its reserved decision.

"New Zealand Sugar Company knew what its responsibilities were to consumers – ensuring the safety and suitability of its products and managing any potential risk to consumers.

"It failed to properly detect the extent of lead contamination until after the imported sugar had been used in production.

"Offending at this scale is rare, and the Court's sentence today sends a strong message that it will not be tolerated," says Vincent Arbuckle.