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PRESS RELEASE

www.consumersfiji.org

Sausage makers not disclosing sausage casing ingredients

The Consumer Council of Fiji wants food manufacturers to fully disclose information on the ingredients used for sausage casing on labels. The call comes after the Council received complaints from individuals and the largest Hindu religious organization- Sanatan Dharam Prithinidhi Sabha of Fiji on some brands of sausages sold in supermarkets not disclosing sausage casing ingredients or having labels with beef ingredient written in very small prints. There is a growing concern among consumers that food labels should disclose all information so that consumers make informed purchasing decisions.

Some consumers suffer from various allergies and hence do not eat certain products and even traces of these products can be harmful to consumers. There are other consumers who don't eat certain meat from religious perspective and therefore are demanding full disclosure of information.

Sausage casing is the material that encloses the filling of a sausage. Natural casing is normally made of the protein in beef or lamb whereas artificial casings are either plastic or from a plant material. Consumers who do not consume beef because of religious, cultural or health reasons are unaware on the type of casing used in chicken or lamb sausage because some manufacturers don't disclose whether the casing is made of beef, lamb, plant or plastic material.

A brief survey by the Council in leading supermarkets in Suva, found that only two (2) pre-packed chicken and lamb sausage products out of 12 surveyed disclosed the ingredient used in the casing. The two products are Chicken Sausages, where the manufacturer provided ingredient information on the casing (although in small print). The other 10 products did not carry any information on the casing ingredients which could be made from beef, lamb, plant or plastic material. The survey also found four (4) pre-packed sausages that did not have any information at all on the ingredients as required under Part V, Section 21 of the Food Safety Act 2003. These were Wahleys- Lamb BBQ Pre-Cooked & Wahleys Lamb Sausages; First Choice -Lamb cheese & Onion and Hibiscus Lamb Precooked.


The table below shows results of sausage casing survey

#	Brand Name	Type of Sausage	Type of Casing	Ingredients Information for sausage filling
1	Top Taste	Lamb (Pre-cooked)	Not stated	Yes: Lamb Mutton Trimmings, Cereal Binder, Flour, Salt, Mineral Salts (451, 450), Selected Spices, Sugar, Normal Flour, HVP Flavor Enhancer (621), Preservative (223), Water.
2	Farmers	Lamb (Pre-cooked)	Not stated	Yes: Lamb Mutton Trimmings, Cereal Binder, Flour, Salt, Mineral Salts (451, 450), Selected Spices, Sugar, Normal

				salt ,Soy Protein HVP Flavour Enhancer (621), Preservative (223), Water.
3	First choice	Chicken Sausages	Not stated	Yes: chicken MDM/Skin Cereal Binder, Flour, Salt, Mineral Salt (451-450) selected spices, Sugar, Normal Salt, soy protein, HVP, Flavour Enhancer (621) water, Vegetable oil.
4	Top Taste	Lamb Sausages "Premium Quality"	Not Stated	Lamb Trimmings, Salt, Selected Spices, Potato Starch, Soya Protein & Water
5	Wahleys	Lamb BBQ Pre-Cooked	Not Stated	Not Stated
6	Wahleys	Lamb	Not Stated	Not Stated
7	First Choice	Lamb Cheese & Onion	Not Stated	Not Stated
8	Oxford	Beef Sausages	Not stated	Beef Trimmings, Salt, Selected Spices, Potato Starch, Soya Protein & Water
9	First Choice	Chicken Frankfurters	Not stated	Chicken Breast Meat, Soy Flour, Salt, Selected Spices, Palm Oil & Water
10	Crest Chicken	Chicken Sausages (Pre- Cook)	Yes Beef protein.	Chicken , modified starches, Salts, Spices
11	Crest Chicken	Chicken Sausages – Halal certified. (Pre- Cook)	Yes Natural Lamb Casing	Chicken , modified starches, Salts, Spices
12	Hibiscus	Lamb (Pre-cooked)	Not stated	Not stated

The Council thought it was imperative for us to inform consumers which sausages disclosed ingredient information on casing and which did not so that consumers are able to make informed choices. Furthermore, the Council had raised this issue of disclosure of ingredient information on casing with the Ministry of Health's Food Unit; however, according to the Food Unit declaring the type of casing used was only a moral/ethical obligation by companies and had nothing to do with food safety. We were also told that casing was not part of the ingredient and as such was not required to be listed as ingredient. Therefore it is left on the Council to inform consumers on what is available in the market so that consumers can make informed decisions on what type of sausage to buy.

Proper labelling is extremely important for consumers because they need to know what they are buying and eating. Manufactures should become more socially responsible and should honestly and truthfully label their products disclosing all information, considering the needs of the customers. The Council is also calling on consumers to choose the type of sausage that best fits their needs based on the information provided by the Council since most food manufacturers are not sensitive to the religious and cultural concerns of consumers. Consumers should contact Consumer Council if they need further clarification.



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PREMILA KUMAR

Chief Executive Officer