



## Arkansas Department of Health

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4815 West Markham Street • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867 • Telephone (501) 661-2000

**Governor Mike Beebe**

**Paul K. Halverson, DrPH, FACHE, Director and State Health Officer**

January 18, 2008

Richard Vendetti  
Southern Shrimp Alliance  
PO Box 1781  
Brunswick, Georgia 31520

Dear Mr. Vendetti:

Thank you for your interest in the safety of Arkansas's food supply. As was revealed during the testing of imported catfish samples procured from Arkansas distributors in 2007, the Arkansas Public Health Laboratory ("Laboratory") lacked the equipment to test aquaculture food products utilizing the methodologies that are outlined by the federal Food and Drug Administration ("FDA"). That necessitated a request to the federal Food and Drug Administration to utilize their laboratories to test those samples. Like most states, Arkansas did not historically take samples or provide testing of imported aquaculture products and relied solely upon the FDA to protect its citizens. If Arkansas wanted to test samples in a scientifically accepted method, it became apparent that the Laboratory would have to become properly equipped and its personnel trained in the proper procedures.

Through the efforts of interested legislators and Arkansas's catfish producers, the Laboratory will be equipped and its personnel trained to test aquaculture products by February 1, 2008. The laboratory will be testing samples for fluoroquinolone antibiotics, malachite green, crystal violet and melamine. This will alleviate the necessity for requesting that samples be done by the FDA (the FDA has indicated an unwillingness to provide testing in the future) or a private laboratory. Arkansas will obviously be in a much better position to ensure the safety of both domestic and imported aquaculture products consumed by its citizens.

The Laboratory has committed to testing up to five aquaculture samples per quarter in order to maintain proficiency. If conditions warrant additional testing, the Laboratory will be in a position to test samples in a timely and efficient manner. In the event that the Department of Health is satisfied that there is good reason to believe that any adulterated food product is dangerous to the health or welfare of the citizens of Arkansas, new rules that were adopted by the State Board of Health will allow the Director of the Department to take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the citizenry.

The Department appreciates your interest in this matter. The Department believes that, with the passage of the rules by the Board of Health and the steps taken by the Laboratory to test samples, positive strides have been taken to ensure the safety of aquaculture products in Arkansas.

Sincerely,



Charles McGrew

Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer

cc:   Morril Harriman  
      Representative Robert Moore  
      Jeff Baxter  
      Dennington Moss  
      Rusty Moss  
      Robert Brech  
      Dr. Glen Baker  
      Jodiane Tritt



# Arkansas Department of Health

4815 West Markham Street • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867 • Telephone (501) 661-2000

Governor Mike Beebe

Paul K. Halverson, DrPH, FACHE, Director and State Health Officer

February 5, 2008

Richard Vendetti  
 Southern Shrimp Alliance  
 PO Box 1781  
 Brunswick, Georgia 31520

Dear Mr. Vendetti:

In May of 2007 the department was given the task to determine if fish products from within or outside the country were contaminated with similar illegal products found in other states.

We contacted FDA and they agreed to run samples for us. Our Public Health Laboratory was not equipped at the time to run samples for the flouroquinolone antibiotics and dyes used in the industry outside of this country. We took eight samples in various numbers from some of the establishments listed below one of which was domestic catfish.

All samples were negative for antibiotics. One sample was positive for Gentian Violet or Crystal Violet, an illegal dye or antifungal agent. This lot was destroyed by this office.

One sample was also found to contain melamine which was of great concern to the FDA at the time. FDA determined at 15 ppb that we did not need to take action on this sample.


FACILITY	ADDRESS	CITY	PRODUCT	Origin	Cases	
Ben E. Keith	1200 N. Pike Avenue	North Little Rock 72114	Catfish	China	206 @ 15 lbs.	3090 lbs.
Performance Food Group	4901 Asher Avenue	Little Rock 72204	Catfish	China	On Hand, But Numbers Unavailable	
Sysco Food Services of Ar.	5800 Frozen Road	Little Rock 72209	Catfish	China	1001 @ 15 lbs.	15015 lbs.
U.S. Foodservice	800 Fiber Optic Drive	North Little Rock 72117	Catfish	China	90 @ 15 lbs.	1350 lbs.
Wal Mart Distribution Center	Sterlin Hurley Drive	Clarksville 72830	Catfish	China	103 @ 10 lbs.	1030 lbs.
Affiliated Foods Southwest	12103 I-30	Little Rock 72209	Basa	Malaysia	362 @ 15 lbs.	5430 lbs.
Ben E. Keith	1200 N. Pike Avenue	North Little Rock 72114	Pangasius		70 @ 15 lbs.	1050 lbs.

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Richard Vendetti  
Southern Shrimp Alliance  
January 28, 2008

No other testing has been undertaken by our office, however, we are securing the equipment necessary to do our own testing in the near future.

If you have any other questions please contact me at this office.

Sincerely,



J. Terry Paul, R.S.  
Branch Chief Environmental Services

CC: Charles McGrew, Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer