

## FDA eyes NY firm in pistachio recall probe

April 2 2009, By GARANCE BURKE , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- Authorities looking into the nationwide pistachio recall said Thursday they are investigating a California nut processor's sister company in New York where officials last month found cockroaches and rodent droppings.

The [Food and Drug Administration](#) said that Commack, N.Y.-based Setton International Foods Inc. shares key staff and packages food with Setton Pistachio of Terra Bella Inc., the nation's second-largest pistachio processor.

The central California firm earlier this week recalled 2 million pounds of nuts over fears of possible [salmonella contamination](#).

Last month, New York agricultural authorities discovered nearly two dozen dead cockroaches, rodent droppings and one live cockroach on an ingredient rolling rack inside the Commack plant, which failed its state health inspection.

Inspectors went back for a second visit Wednesday to swab the plant and take food samples to be tested for salmonella and other [pathogens](#) as part of the pistachio recall, said Jessica Chittenden, a spokeswoman for the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets. The test results are pending.

"Right now nothing is moving out of that plant. They're holding all products with pistachios in them," Chittenden said. "When we were in there yesterday to collect samples, they were cooperative, and we

observed that they are working on the issues that we had outlined in our last inspection."

Chittenden said she was told federal inspectors also had visited the plant this week, but the FDA said they couldn't disclose details about the ongoing investigation.

The two companies share a CEO, Joshua Setton, and label packages of bulk and retail foods with both firms' names, FDA spokesman Mike Herndon said.

A spokesman for both companies declined to comment Thursday on the probe, but said the California company supplies all pistachios used in the 50,000-square foot New York processing facility, which makes chocolate and yogurt-coated nuts and dried fruit.

So far, there have been no confirmed reports of illness linked to the recalled nuts.

Still, federal health officials warned people this week to avoid eating all pistachios and products containing them while they determine what foods could be tainted. In the meantime, a range of products from nut bars to ice cream and cake mixes remain in limbo on grocery shelves, and the number of recalled product continues to grow.

Setton International Foods has not issued its own recall, Chittenden said.

Kraft Foods Inc. first alerted the FDA to the contamination after their manufacturer in Skokie, Ill. turned up salmonella in a routine test of roasted pistachios that workers planned to add to trail mix.

Private auditors hired by Kraft found problems they think caused the contamination when they traveled to Setton Pistachio's processing

facility in Terra Bella, a remote town in California's farm belt. Lee Cohen, the production manager for Setton International Foods, said Tuesday he suspected that roasted pistachios at the facility could have been contaminated by salmonella-tainted raw nuts they were processed with.

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