

Poland pulls food suspected of having road salt

March 9 2012

(AP) -- Polish health authorities have ordered the withdrawal from the market of more than 230,000 kilograms (500,000 pounds) of pickles, bread and other food suspected of containing industrial salt, the latest development in a scandal raising fears about food safety.

Revelations that industrial salt was sold to food producers has prompted authorities to open a [criminal investigation](#) and arrest five people. More than 600 tests have also been carried out on [food samples](#). The industrial salt was intended for deicing roads in winter.

Poland is a major regional food exporter, and officials fear the issue will hurt its reputation in a sector key to an economy that has grown fast in recent years. With much of its territory devoted to agriculture, Poland produces everything from apples and beets to eggs and meat that gets sold to Germany and other neighboring countries.

[Laboratory tests](#) so far have found that the amounts of [dioxins](#) and [heavy metals](#) in the salt are minimal and unlikely to harm human health.

Nonetheless, the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate ordered the withdrawal of suspect food as a precaution, its spokesman, Jan Bondar, said Friday.

The foods include vegetables that are preserved in salts, likes pickles and sauerkraut and beets, but also sausages and breads and other baked goods.

Even if the salt used does not contain anything harmful, it still is not

enriched with iodine, as the law requires for food, said the inspectorate, which is a state body responsible for food safety and other public health matters.

It said that three companies in northern and western Poland are suspected of selling industrial salt to food producers, a violation that came to light nearly two weeks ago and which has left Polish officials scrambling to ensure that food on the market is safe.

The [food producers](#) that used the questionable salt have been told not to let the foods leave their warehouses.

Agriculture Minister Marek Sawicki said he was worried that the scandal - which has received a lot of media coverage in Poland - is unfairly hurting the image of Poland's food.

"We worked too long for the good image of Polish products and Polish food to let one or more cheats destroy our image now," Sawicki said Thursday.

Neighboring Czech Republic has temporarily banned edible salt imports from Poland as a precaution.

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