

Salmonella found in world's biggest chocolate plant

June 30 2022, by Anne-Laure MONDESERT



Barry Callebaut's plant in Wieze, Belgium, produces liquid chocolate in wholesale batches for 73 clients making confectionaries.

Production has been halted in the world's biggest chocolate plant, run by Swiss giant Barry Callebaut in the Belgian town of Wieze, after

salmonella contaminations were found, the firm said Thursday.

A company spokesman told AFP that production had been protectively halted at the factory, which produces liquid chocolate in wholesale batches for 73 clients making confectionaries.

The company said that 72 of the 73 companies have confirmed that they halted deliveries of potentially contaminated chocolate in time to prevent any hitting the shops and were waiting for a response from the last client.

There have been no reports so far of any chocolate consumers being exposed to salmonella, which causes salmonellosis, a disease that causes diarrhoea and fever but is only dangerous in the most extreme cases.

"All products manufactured since the test have been blocked," spokesman Korneel Warlop said.

"Barry Callebaut is currently contacting all customers who may have received contaminated products. Chocolate production in Wieze remains suspended until further notice."

Most of the products discovered to be contaminated are still on the site, he said.

But the firm has contacted all its clients and asked them not to ship any products they have made with chocolate made since June 25 at these Wieze plant, which is in Flanders, northwest of Brussels.

"Food safety is of the utmost importance for Barry Callebaut and this contamination is quite exceptional. We have a well-defined food safety charter and procedures," the firm said.



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Green light

Belgium's food safety agency AFSCA has been informed and a spokesman told AFP it had opened an investigation.

An AFSCA spokesman said investigators would "gather all the information in order to trace the contamination".

The Wieze plant does not make chocolates to be sold directly to consumers, and the firm has no reason to believe that any contaminated goods made by clients have yet made it onto shop shelves.

The scare comes a few weeks after a case of chocolates contaminated with salmonella in the Ferrero factory in Arlon in southern Belgium manufacturing Kinder chocolates.

Belgian health authorities said on June 17 that they had given the green light to restart the Italian giant's factory for a three-month test period.

Swiss group Barry Callebaut supplies cocoa and chocolate products to many companies in the food industry, including industry giants such as Hershey, Mondelez, Nestle or Unilever.

World number one in the sector, its annual sales amounted to 2.2 million tonnes during the 2020-2021 financial year.

Over the past financial year, the group, which has a head office in Zurich, generated a net profit of 384.5 million Swiss francs (\$402 million) for 7.2 billion francs in turnover.

The group employs more than 13,000 people, has more than 60 production sites worldwide.

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Citation: Salmonella found in world's biggest chocolate plant (2022, June 30) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-06-salmonella-world-biggest-chocolate.html>

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