

Cost cutting may be behind high levels of lead in recalled applesauce products

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is currently investigating whether or not the cinnamon used in applesauce pouches that have been tied to high lead levels in children may have been deliberately tainted with the toxic element. The FDA suspects the deliberate adulteration of cinnamon included in the applesauce products was "economically motivated," according to a source at the agency.

"We're still in the midst of our investigation. But so far all of the signals we're getting lead to an intentional act on the part of someone in the [supply chain](#) and we're trying to sort of figure that out," Jim Jones, the FDA deputy commissioner for human foods, told [Politico](#). "My instinct is they didn't think this product was going to end up in a country with a robust regulatory process. They thought it was going to end up in places that did not have the ability to detect something like this."

As of the [latest FDA update](#) on Dec. 12, 65 children younger than 6 years of age had been diagnosed with symptoms of lead poisoning tied to the recalled applesauce.

Cases of high blood lead levels in children have now been reported in 22 states: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

U.S. and Ecuadorian authorities are cooperating and have traced the cinnamon to Negasmart, which supplies the spice to Austrofoods, which manufactures the applesauce pouches in Ecuador. The FDA said Negasmart is now operating under an "Ecuadorian administrative sanctions process."

An FDA spokesperson also told *Politico*, "We have limited authority over foreign ingredient suppliers that do not directly ship product to the U.S. because their food undergoes further manufacturing/processing prior to export." Still, he said, "we're going to chase that data and find whoever was responsible and hold them accountable."

The applesauce pouches under recall so far are from three brands—Weis, WanaBana, and Schnucks. Each is tied to the same manufacturing facility in Ecuador, which the FDA said it is now

inspecting.

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