

South African infant formula purchase boycott lacks 'merit' - Nestlé

By Mark Astley, 07-Jun-2012

Nestlé South Africa has shrugged-off threats of a purchasing boycott relating to infant formula among the country's Hindu community, stating that the encouragement by a religious leader lacks "merit."

The threat, which was outlined in a letter to the firm, urged the South African Hindu community to boycott the purchase of three Nestlé Nan Hypo Allergenic (HA) infant formula products over concerns that pork enzymes were used during processing.

The concerns relate to the use of trypsin, a by-product of insulin sourced from pigs.

In the letter, president of the South African Hindu Dharma Sabha, Ram Maharaj, said that the Sabha would not allow Nestlé to *"trample upon Hindu sensitivities without impunity."*

Hindus, as well as Jews and Muslims, do not consume pork, pork derivatives or traces of any pork constituent.

Nestlé South Africa spokesperson Ravi Pillay told DairyReporter.com that a boycott, as a result of these concerns, would not be merited.

Did not mislead

"We do not see the merits behind this boycott because we did not mislead consumers. We have the trust of all the religious groups involved," said Pillay.

"This issue is in reference to a small batch of imported infant formula. All infant formula products manufactured in South Africa is free of any trace of pork."

"We've actively monitored social media and our customer helplines in our call centres and there is no indication that consumers are heeding this call. We haven't had any further comments about this. In fact we have received congratulations from many figures in the religious groups regarding our manufacturing processes," Pillay added.

The three variants of Nan Hypo Allergenic (HA) infant formula in question - starter, follow-up infant formula and growing up milk – were manufactured and imported in Germany.

Trypsin was used as part of a hydrolysis process to render the protein in cow's milk hypo-allergenic – reducing the allergenicity.

However, as a result of the processes used to manufacture the products, trypsin is not physically present in the final product, the firm added.

Educate and inform

In a written response to Maharaj and the South African Hindu Dharma Sabha, Nestlé South Africa vowed to further educate consumers about ingredients.

"Nestlé is aware of the sensitivities around dietary requirements of our Muslim, Jewish and Hindu communities. We have taken the initiative and the responsibility to educate and inform our consumers accordingly about the ingredients and the processes applied to yield the final product," said the letter.

“As per the norm in the South African market place, Halaal and Kosher products are clearly marked and as such distinguishes these food items for use by Muslim and Jewish communities. Nestlé continuously engages with the relevant religious bodies to ensure product compliance with their respective requirements.”

Source: <http://www.dairyreporter.com>