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Honduras wants compensation for melons that sickened U.S., Canadian consumers

Honduras's trade minister demanded Monday the United States compensate cantaloupe producers whose shipments were stopped after a salmonella outbreak sickened 59 consumers in the United States and Canada.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration asked grocers Saturday to remove from their shelves melons shipped by the Honduran company Agropecuaria Montelibano and suggested shoppers check with stores to see where recently purchased melons came from. It is also seeking to halt the company's future cantaloupe shipments to the United States.

"The United States has the obligation to compensate Agropecuaria Montelibano for the losses it has suffered after its melon exports were paralyzed," Trade Minister Fredys Cerrato said.

Cerrato said the United States has not scientifically proven the fruit was infected in Honduras.

Edilberto Rodriguez, Agropecuaria Montelibano's general managers, said each container sent to the United States is checked by U.S. inspectors.

"We have never had any complaints from our clients in the United States or Europe," Rodriguez said.

Honduran Agriculture Minister Hector Hernandez said a group of Honduran and U.S. experts were analyzing the melons being held in Puerto Cortes, Honduras and Miami.

The FDA said it was continuing to investigate the outbreak with affected states and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fifty people in 16 states and nine in Canada have fallen sick after eating tainted cantaloupes. No deaths have been reported, although 14 people have been in hospital, the FDA said.

Symptoms of food-borne salmonella include nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea and abdominal cramps.

Source: canadianpress.google.com

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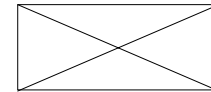
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