

SNOKIST GROWERS

Building Relationships • Producing Excellence

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Regarding a recent article appearing on MSNBC website, here are some facts:

1. In May, 2011 Snokist was notified that our applesauce was implicated in an incident in North Carolina where several school children became mildly ill. The children quickly recovered. There were several cases of our product that contained a can with a knocked down flange. This compromised the container and resulted in the cans leaking. The FDA investigated the incident and Snokist voluntarily recalled any product we suspected may contain this defect. All products manufactured for USDA contracts and shipped to schools were inspected and approved by in-house USDA inspectors.
2. In the course of their investigation, the FDA questioned our process for reconditioning aseptic applesauce totes that may be compromised. It is important to note that if any mold is present on the surface of this product, it is removed before running it back through our thermal process, which renders it commercially sterile. No reconditioned product was used in products going to the USDA.
3. The amount of product in compromised aseptic packaging at the Snokist facility represents a very small amount of the apple tonnage processed over the course of time the totes were produced – less than .3%. The only products affected were applesauce totes that had the seal compromised. These were not sent to customers, but rather placed in cold storage for determination of disposition per our rework policy. In fact, the majority of these totes were destroyed.
4. Our rework policy requires all compromised totes to be evaluated before any rework is done. If rework occurs, the product is checked for patulin, a mycotoxin that can form in apple products. If patulin is present, the product is destroyed. Results on all finished product containing rework we have tested has shown no detectable levels of patulin.
5. An outside firm was consulted in 2009 to determine the cause of any failures in our aseptic package. They thoroughly reviewed our process and all of the recommendations that were contained in the consultant's report were addressed. This was communicated to the FDA in our response to their observations.
6. Snokist is a grower owned cooperative that has been operating for over 100 years and has a history of manufacturing only top quality, wholesome products that are manufactured and tested to industry standards. We feel we have fully complied with the observations made in the 6/02/11 FDA form 483 and are in the process of responding to the Warning Letter that resulted from the inspection. Our thermal processes have been examined by an outside process authority to insure the products we manufacture are commercially sterile.