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#### Report Highlights:

\*Officials firm on irradiation ban of contaminated meat \*Companies discuss concerns over draft law on consumer protection \*City limits fresh food wholesale trade to three licensed markets

#### General Information:

Welcome to "News Summary" from Vietnam, an occasional summary of issues of interest to the U. S. agricultural community. The report includes information that has been garnered during travel within Vietnam, reported in the local media, or offered by host country officials and agricultural analysts. Press articles are included and summarized in this report. Significant issues may be expanded upon in subsequent reports from this office. Minor grammatical changes have been made for clarification.

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### **Officials firm on irradiation ban of contaminated meat**

Animal health authorities yesterday flatly rejected complaints by meat importers, saying no changes will be made to the regulation that prohibits irradiation of tainted or spoiled imported meat for human consumption.

"It is unacceptable that sterilizing of low-quality meat for being sold as food is allowed," said Bui Quang Anh, head of the Department of Animal Health, who chaired a meeting yesterday in Ho Chi Minh City with more than 50 meat importers in the southern region.

Nguyen Xuan Binh, deputy director of the Animal Health Agency Zone No. VI, said all imported meat from August 20 onwards have to be tested by animal health agencies before they are transported out of international ports.

The products that fail to pass the inspections would have to be sent back, destroyed or used to make animal feed.

Products that pass will also undergo strict inspections by local animal health agencies when they are stored in freezers by the importers, he said.

Until now, most imported meat found contaminated with bacteria had been irradiated as a sterilizing measure before being sold as food.

However, several studies found the quality of meat could not be retained thus, leading to the new regulations banning irradiation of tainted meat.

Several importers yesterday sharply criticized the regulation, saying they would have to quit the business if the regulation was not annuled.

"Banning irradiation of meat is a groundless regulation," a representative of the Huong Viet Company said. "Meat is produced following hygienic processes, like in the US, and is of much better quality than domestic meat."

Other enterprises said prices of pork could increase to as much as VND100,000 (US\$5.84) per kilogram if it were not for imports.

A representative of Generalimex said chicken prices could have gone up to VND60,000 (\$3.50) per kilogram from the current VND30,000-VND40,000 per kilogram without imports.

However, animal health agencies later rejected all the importers' complaints.

Anh said other countries allowed irradiation of food to maintain quality, not for processing tainted food.

*(Thanh Nien Daily – August 13, 2009, By QUANG THUAN)*

### **Companies discuss concerns over draft law on consumer protection**

A conference for businesses and their associations to raise concerns over the new customer protection law draft was held yesterday by the Viet Nam Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

The ideas contributed at the event were to improve the fourth draft of the consumer law, which will regulate businesses' responsibilities before, during and after making a deal with consumers, as well as measures that can be implemented by customers to protect their own rights.

Representatives from several business associations made suggestions on eight issues relating to consumer definitions, the law's scope and objective, dispute mediation, customer protection office models, the Customer Protection Fund and product responsibility.

Speaking at the conference, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Le Danh Vinh emphasised the importance of a new consumer protection law. "The existing laws can't keep up with the increase in quantity and the level of seriousness in regards to violations." He also highlighted enterprises' roles, because the law aimed to protect not only customers' rights, but also business operators' reputations and interests.

The new law draft was expected to be passed in 2010 to replace the current Decree on Consumer Protection, which has been in place since 1999.

*(Vietnam News Aug. 13, 2009)*

### **City limits fresh food wholesale trade to three licensed markets**

Ho Chi Minh City has decided that wholesale trade of farm produce and food can only be carried on at three major wholesale markets and retailed by licensed traders.

As part of its efforts to develop the wholesale and retail networks and ensure safety and hygiene, the administration has also urged district officials to crack down on the sale of food and foodstuff by hawkers and impromptu markets.

The measures, part of the city's plan on trading of agricultural products and food that came into force on Monday, also seek to safeguard traders who were recently relocated from wholesale markets around the city to the three facilities in Binh Dien, Hoc Mon and Thu Duc districts.

Under the new regulations, the markets will act as trading floors for farm produce and food, enabling city authorities to gradually monitor the origin and hygiene of products.

The three wholesale markets normally supply around 90 per cent of the aquatic produce, 75 per cent of the vegetables, and 80 per cent of the meat consumed in the city.

*(Vietnam News Aug. 10, 2009)*