

PRESS RELEASE

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Comprehensive food safety and consumer protection inspections in spring – focusing on popular Easter foods and restaurants, gluten- and lactose-free products, price labeling, and promotions

Approaching the Easter holidays, the National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection (NATCP) and government agencies under its professional supervision are launching a nationwide inspection to ensure compliance with food safety rules for seasonal foods. The inspections will also cover the labeling of products intended for specific consumer groups. In addition, the price labeling of products associated with the Easter holidays and compliance with rules on promotional prices will also be inspected.

In the period leading up to Easter, we shop more consciously and often more generously, as the festive table is laden with special, often seasonal products. Due to the increased turnover and the multitude of promotions, the presence of the authorities is particularly important at this time. During the holiday preparation period, the NATCP closely monitors the functioning of the market so that families can choose from reliable, properly labeled products under clear and transparent conditions.

The most popular food products include table eggs, fresh lamb and pork, cured and smoked meat products, chocolate figures, and soft sweets. Due to the increase in the sale of these products, inspections will focus particularly on food safety, compliance with hygiene requirements, labeling, and traceability. Based on food safety inspections carried out in retail outlets and catering establishments during the same period last year, official proceedings were initiated in 18 cases, resulting in the withdrawal of more than 3,300 kg of unsafe, untraceable products from circulation. The fines imposed amounted to nearly HUF 6 million.

This year, the checks will extend to the quality class of eggs, the packaging center code, the weight class, and the accuracy of origin information, as well as hygiene requirements for fresh meat and

meat products, HACCP, i.e. regulations related to the prevention of hazards occurring during the handling and distribution of food, as well as the control of microbiological and chemical contaminants and unauthorized food additives that can be excluded by laboratory tests. During the testing of Easter chocolate figures and jelly sweets, the presence of vegetable fats other than cocoa butter, the amount of milk fat and allergenic ingredients are checked, while at points of sale, hygiene conditions, the protected storage of products and personal hygiene are examined.

Inspections will also be carried out at tourist attractions, fairs, and shopping centers. During the inspections, the authority's staff will pay particular attention to the certification of the origin of raw materials, traceability, the proper packaging, transport and storage of food, compliance with the prescribed temperature requirements, and the provision of accurate and comprehensible information to consumers, with particular regard to allergenic substances.

In addition, during their inspections, experts focus particularly on gluten- and lactose-free products, as consumers with these sensitivities exclude ingredients that trigger their sensitivity from their diet in order to maintain their health and rely primarily on product labeling when making purchases. In recent years, the rejection rate has been minimal, below 5%, but the popularity of these products and their impact on health justify the continuation of inspections.

The purpose of laboratory tests is to ensure that gluten-free products actually contain no more than 20 mg/kg of gluten, as permitted by law, while in the case of lactose-free products, the accuracy of the labeling is checked in terms of ingredients and consumer information. Products suitable for sampling during the Easter period include cakes, bread, pancake and pizza mixes, biscuits, flours, gluten-free oat drinks, as well as lactose-free yogurts, sour creams, curd desserts, whipped creams, butter creams, cheeses, chocolates, and ice creams.

Sampling takes place nationwide, including supermarkets, grocery stores, market halls, markets, organic shops, diet shops, online stores, and temporary, seasonal sales outlets.

In addition, government agencies under the professional supervision of the NATCP also check the price labeling of products associated with the Easter holiday and compliance with rules on promotional prices. Among other things, they check for clear price labeling, accurate indication of the selling price and unit price, and, in the case of sale prices, the correct application of the provisions relating to the previous price.

The aim of the inspections carried out by the NATCP and government agencies is to ensure safe and fair shopping based on accurate information, to filter out misleading products, and to promote fair market conduct.

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National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection