

PRESS RELEASE

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Spring food safety and hygiene inspections – the NATCP inspected catering establishments and popular products

The National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection (NATCP), in cooperation with the government agencies under its professional supervision, inspected 240 food service establishments and examined 600 food products during the spring. As a result of these proceedings, fines totaling more than 21 million forints were imposed. The authority withdrew a total of 345 kilograms of products from circulation due to expired best-by or use-by dates, as well as food products that could not be properly traced.

During the spring priority inspections, the focus was primarily on inspecting catering establishments operating in tourist hotspots or outdoor venues, as well as catering facilities in shopping centers. Staff from the National Food Chain Safety Office (NATCP) and government agencies conducted a total of 240 inspections. In most cases, minor deficiencies were identified; however, in four instances, it became necessary to restrict operations or temporarily suspend the operation of the affected catering establishment.

Hygiene issues arose in 27% of the inspections. Among the deficiencies observed were, among other things, clutter in food preparation areas, significant dirt on equipment, walls, and floors, the presence of grease buildup, and a lack of cleaning. In several cases, heavy mold growth was also observed on the internal ventilation fans in the cold storage rooms. Another problem was that the mobile food stalls set up at the fairs, despite their small footprint, did not have adequate vegetable preparation areas; nevertheless, they used unwashed ingredients, and there was a lack of hot and cold running water and a closed-system sewage disposal system.

Due to the irregularities uncovered, proceedings were initiated in 55 cases, and the total amount of fines imposed so far has reached 10 million forints. The authorities have withdrawn a total of 345

kilograms of products from circulation due to food items with expired shelf lives or use-by dates, or those that could not be properly traced.

At the same time, the authority inspected not only food service establishments but also products that are particularly popular during the spring season, such as table eggs, marinated and smoked meat products, fresh meats, as well as chocolate figures and liqueur-filled candies. In addition to general food hygiene and safety requirements, the experts primarily checked product labeling, traceability, and employee personal hygiene.

The authority conducted a total of 611 inspections. Proceedings were initiated against 94 commercial establishments due to the identified deficiencies, typically for hygiene issues (14%), and to a lesser extent for labeling (7%) and traceability (8.5%) irregularities. Recurring issues included the lack of labeling in Hungarian, the alteration of expiration dates, and incomplete traceability documentation.

During the inspections, 3,080 domestic and 624 imported food items were examined, and the total amount of fines imposed has so far reached nearly 11 million forints.

One positive finding is that the distribution of marinated and smoked meat products sold at markets and fairs was in compliance, and vendors possessed the necessary documentation. In general, it can be stated that, relative to the number of inspections, a favorable proportion of deficiencies were found in the distribution of meat products and table eggs.

The authority's inspection activities are ongoing throughout the year. The NATCP's objective is not only to protect consumer health and safety but also to promote compliance with the law by businesses.

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National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection