



MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRESHWATER FISH BANNED FROM READY-TO-EAT RAW FISH DISHES

Retail food establishments are to use only saltwater fish intended for raw consumption

Singapore, 5 December 2015 – As a further step to protect consumers from public health risks, the National Environment Agency (NEA) will ban with immediate effect the use of freshwater fish in all ready-to-eat (RTE) raw fish dishes sold by retail food establishments. Tests conducted by Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) and NEA have found such fish to have significantly higher bacterial contamination than saltwater fish, and are likely to present higher risks of infection when consumed raw. The ban will help protect consumers and give greater peace of mind to the public, especially during the upcoming Chinese New Year season when consumption of raw fish in *yusheng* dishes is expected to increase.

2 All retail food establishments that wish to sell RTE raw fish dishes, such as *yusheng* dishes, are henceforth to use only saltwater fish intended for raw consumption. By saltwater fish intended for raw consumption, we are referring to fish that are typically bred or harvested from cleaner waters, and stored and distributed according to appropriate cold chain management practices. These fish must also be handled hygienically throughout the supply chain and kept separate from other fish intended for cooking, to avoid cross contamination. Most fish sold at Singapore's wet markets, fresh produce section of supermarkets, and fishery ports do not meet these conditions, and should not be eaten raw.

Agencies will work with industries on compliance

3 NEA will be issuing notices to retail food establishments to inform them of the ban on the use of freshwater fish for RTE raw fish dishes. **Food stalls (hawker centres, coffeeshops, canteens, food courts) and food establishments providing catering services are required to stop the sale of all RTE raw fish dishes using saltwater fish until they can comply with the practices required for RTE raw fish dishes.** To help fish suppliers and retail food establishments understand the requirements for sale of fish intended for raw consumption, AVA and NEA will conduct engagement sessions over the next few weeks.

4 Restaurant operators can sell RTE raw fish dishes provided they comply with the practices required for RTE raw fish dishes. Restaurant operators generally observe proper cold chain and food handling management in their food preparation,

and the fish used in their RTE raw fish dishes is also typically sourced from suppliers of fish intended for raw consumption. In addition, NEA’s surveillance data indicate that such fish sampled from restaurants have low levels of overall bacterial contamination. NEA will tighten surveillance of all restaurants, and continue to enforce against errant food operators.

5 AVA will work with NEA to ensure that the fish intended for raw consumption are closely monitored and tested for safety. AVA and NEA will also work with the industry to meet the expected increased demand for *yusheng* dishes during the coming Chinese New Year season.

Risks always present in consuming raw food

6 While investigations did not detect Type III GBS ST283 (the strain of GBS associated with the recent spike in human cases) in sashimi sold at retail food establishments, members of the public should note that there are always risks involved in consuming raw fish as harmful bacteria and parasites may be present. Should one choose to consume raw fish, the risk of food borne illness can be reduced by purchasing fish that are intended for raw consumption.

7 Vulnerable groups of people, such as young children, pregnant women, elderly persons, or people with chronic illness, such as diabetes, should avoid the consumption of raw fish.

5 December 2015
=====