

Kano Killer-Drink Contains Terrorism Chemical, Says NAFDAC

● *Culprits arrested*

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has found out that the chemical added to the killer flavoured drink that led to the death of three persons in Kano State contained 'Hydroxylamine,' used for terrorism.

It said all the merchants of the deadly chemicals and additives had been apprehended while further investigation continued.

The Director-General of NAFDAC, Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, in a statement yesterday, signed by NAFDAC's Resident Media Consultant, Sayo Akintola, warned Nigerians against adding chemicals and additives to food and drinks to enhance the taste.

She stated that such practices could result in severe illness and even death.

On the recent Kano incident where three persons reportedly died as a result of their consumption of dangerous chemicals used as additives,

Adeyeye said a preliminary result of the agency's investigation indicated that the additive chemical was hydroxylamine.

"Having tested the additive chemical, it was discovered to be hydroxylamine. It's poison.

"Sometimes it's used for terrorism. This is very sad because it involved people dying," she said.

Adeyeye said the investigators found an additive that was kept in a transparent freezer bag.

She said that there was another unknown chemical that was sold as a food additive.

"This chemical for 25 Kg bag was supposed to be sold for N30,000. One of the merchants got it for N3,000 and sold it to another merchant for N7,000. The merchant that got it for N7,000 thought it was Dantsami (Hausa name for "something sour") that they normally use and tested to confirm that truly it was Dantsami. Dantsami is what is used in some parts of Northern Nigeria to make drinks sour.

"A twenty-five kilogrammes bag of the unknown chemical was also sent to the agency's laboratory in Kaduna for testing," she said.

According to her, shortly after the news about the Kano incident was received by NAFDAC, six directorates of the agency launched a probe into the incident.

She added that internal checks revealed that only two of the five flavoured drinks identified in the incident were registered by NAFDAC while three were not on the agency's database.

According to her, samples of the chemicals and additives that were added while preparing the flavoured drinks for consumption were collected and taken to NAFDAC's laboratory in Kaduna for testing.

She said further testing was conducted at the agency's central laboratory in Lagos for confirmation.

"We have five flavoured drinks. Two were registered while three were not. Any food that is unregistered is

not guaranteed by NAFDAC. "It's fake food. It was most likely smuggled into the country," she said.

Adeyeye said the agency tested all the food samples, adding that there were E-Coli bacteria in some of the samples.

She expressed surprise that E-Coli bacteria could get into powder.

The D-G said the preliminary report of the agency had been submitted to the Kano State Governor, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje.

She said that the Pharmacovigilance Directorate of the agency had sent an alert to all its 36 state offices of NAFDAC and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to mount surveillance on the unregistered products and mop up the killer chemical.

She added that the chemical did not pass through NAFDAC as there were no records at the Chemical Evaluation and Research Directorate to suggest that permission was given to anyone to import the chemical.

According to her, internal checks at the Ports Inspection

Directorate revealed that the chemical was not imported through the ports.

"Definitely, it was smuggled into the country," she said, noting that before any chemical can be legally imported into Nigeria, full authorisation and permit must be obtained from NAFDAC to ensure that no dangerous chemicals are brought into the country and used to the detriment of the Nigerian people.

"For safety and security concerns, NAFDAC does end-to-end monitoring for all chemicals. We request distribution and utilisation patterns before we give importers permits to import chemicals. We must know who you have sold the chemicals to in your report. These are the things you must clarify to us before we give approval for a permit to clear chemical consignments," she said.

Adeyeye regretted that three fatalities were recorded from the Kano incident with many people having their health compromised.

She said it was heart-

warming to note that all the merchants of the deadly chemicals and additives had been apprehended while further investigation continued.

"We are very particular about food additives, about the temperature at which food can be kept, or about the expiration date of food. If all of these are violated, then there could be foo

She stated that adding chemicals and other substances either to enhance the food or change its form can be dangerous, especially when NAFDAC can't verify the source and content of such additives.

Adeyeye said NAFDAC was working with the Kano State Government with a view to preventing the recurrence of March 11, 2021 incident.

She said NAFDAC would be working with the Kano State task force under the Federal Task Force on Counterfeit and Fake Drugs and Unwholesome Processed Foods, which is domiciled in NAFDAC, and Nigeria Consumers Protection Agency in Kano.