

## **PRESS RELEASE**

5<sup>th</sup> January, 2010

### **FOOD AND DRUGS BOARD (FDB) ORDERS RE-EXPORTATION OF RICE ON BOARD MV STEFANIS**

The Food and Drugs Board (FDB) received information about a ship (MV Stefanis), which was carrying a consignment of UNPL EMATA MYANMAR RICE (11466 Metric Tonnes – 229, 938 x 50Kg bags) which had earlier been rejected by Sierra Leone and Guinea for being unwholesome for human consumption heading towards Ghana. This information was immediately passed on the National Security.

Upon the arrival of the said ship in Ghana on 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2009, it was noticed that there was no consignee in Ghana, the consignment of 229, 938 x 50Kg bags of rice was weevil infested and the product had also not been registered by the Food and Drugs Board as required by the Food and Drugs Act 1992, (PNDCL 305B) thereby making its quality and safety questionable.

Further investigation by the Food and Drugs Board revealed that an official of the Port Health Authority (PHA) had fumigated the heavily weevil infested rice on board the ship. Subsequently the said official of Port Health Authority also allegedly picked one bag out of 229, 938 bags for testing at the Ghana Standards Board laboratories.

Considering the food safety implications, the Food and Drugs Board met with officials of National Security, Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS) and Port Health Authority and made them aware of the reasons why the consignment of the said rice cannot be offloaded for sale in Ghana or transited through Ghana as it was:

1. Heavily infested with weevils
2. With offensive odour, discoloured and caked indicating excessive deterioration
3. Not registered by the Food and Drugs Board
4. Not bearing any consignee

Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS) further agreed to delete the said ship from its manifest in order to make it impossible for it to berth and offload its cargo.

Notwithstanding all these measures taken by Food and Drugs Board, National Security and CEPS to prevent the berthing of the ship, MV Stefanis and the discharge of the said unwholesome rice, the Food and Drugs Board received an information that some officials at the Tema Port (Port Health and Scanship) took advantage of the Christmas Holidays and allowed the ship to come into berth and discharged 15,000 bags of the weevil infested rice into Shed 8 at the Tema Port.

The Food and Drugs Board in liaison with National Security, CEPS and other relevant agencies took immediate steps to prevent the release of the implicated rice onto the Ghanaian market, by quarantining the 15,000 bags in Shed 8 at the Tema Port.

An agent who all of a sudden surfaced and claimed that the above rice was consigned to him and that the rice was in transit to Burkina Faso was told that if the rice was bad for Ghanaians it was equally bad for Burkinabes. Meanwhile investigations have also revealed that the said unwholesome rice has no consignee in Burkina Faso.

To assure the general public that the said unwholesome rice would not be allowed onto the Ghanaian market, the Food and Drugs Board issued a Press Release on the 30th December, 2009 to the effect that all steps have been taken in liaison with the National Security, CEPS and other relevant agencies to prevent the rice getting onto the Ghanaian market and to ensure the eventual re-export of the implicated consignment as soon as possible.

The level of weevil infestation, the presence of foul odour, caking and discolouration are indications of serious deterioration of the rice, thus rendering the whole consignment unfit for human consignment.

In view of the above, the Food and Drugs Board in liaison with National Security and Customs Excise and Preventive Service, on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> January, 2010 ordered and supervised the reloading the 15,000 bags of UNPL EMATA MYANMAR RICE, which had been clandestinely offloaded and stored in Shed 8 at Tema Harbour, back onto the ship MV Stefanis and the ship ordered to leave the territorial waters of Ghana.

In order to ensure that the said rice consignment is not placed in any West African Country and potential rebagging and re-exported to Ghana efforts are being made to alert neighbouring West African Countries of this particular ship and its controversial and unwholesome cargo.

The Food and Drugs Board wishes to use this opportunity to assure the general public that public health and safety remains our paramount concern.

**Signed**

**Dr. Stephen K. Opuni**  
**Chief Executive**