

## GERMANY FINDS "FISHY" CHEMICALS IN CHILEAN SALMON

Contributed by Patagonia Times Staff  
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Chilean salmon runs into more problems  
Photo by Benjamin Witte

German health authorities recently detected banned chemicals in Chilean farmed salmon, Ecoceanos News reported last week.

Germany's Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety, or BVL, recently tested 42 samples of Chilean-raised farmed salmon. In two of those samples, BVL officials found traces of crystal violet, an anti-fungal chemical believed to have potentially carcinogenic properties. Crystal violet is not allowed in food exported to the European Union. BVL investigators also found traces of abamectina, an anti-parasite drug that is also banned in Germany.

News of the substance violation comes at a particularly difficult time for the Chilean farmed salmon industry, which is in the midst of a major slowdown due in large part to an ongoing outbreak of Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA). A highly contagious virus, ISA can be lethal to salmon but does not affect humans or other fish.

The disease was first detected in Chilean waters in mid 2007. Since then it has spread throughout the crowded waters of Region X as well as into Region XI, affecting more than 100 fish farms. Chile's ISA woes have led to major job cuts. SalmonChile, the industry's private producers association, acknowledges that some 2,000 workers have been laid off. Union leaders insist twice that many jobs have been lost.

This is not the first time Chilean salmon has failed foreign inspections. Last year, Chilean salmon tested in Taiwan came up positive for malachite green, an anti-fungal drug that's banned in many countries and was outlawed in Chile in 2005. Six months earlier Chilean salmon producers ran into trouble when health officials in Great Britain found a shipment of Chilean salmon to contain crystal violet. And on several occasions between 2003 and 2004, Dutch authorities complained about the presence in Chilean salmon of malachite green, which at the time was banned in Western Europe but was not yet prohibited in Chile.

The BVL findings have prompted calls by Chilean-based NGOs for more transparency over chemical use in the US\$2.2 billion industry. "Once again salmon products coming from Chile are being scrutinized by consumers and by European commercial chains," said Juan Carlos Cárdenas, who heads Ecoceanos. "This shows just how weak the system is for controlling the indiscriminate and/or illegal use of chemicals in food production."

Ecoceanos and other groups claim that Chilean fish farmers use as much as 300 times more antibiotics than their Norwegian counterparts. Together, Chile and Norway produce approximately 80 percent of the world's farmed salmon.

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