Seven Arrested in Latest Chinese Milk Scandal

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese dairy company executive and six other people were arrested after authorities discovered 26 tons of milk powder tainted with a toxic chemical, the latest incident highlighting the country's enduring struggle with food safety, a report said Monday.

The Jinfulai Dairy Company in Yangquan city of Shanxi province traded fresh milk for expired milk powder that contained high levels of the industrial chemical melamine, according to JCRB.com, a legal issues website administered by China's Supreme Court.

The company produced 26 tons of milk powder from the tainted, expired goods obtained in the transaction last December, then sold it in several provinces, the report said. It was not clear whether anyone had been sickened by the tainted milk powder.

Police in Yangquan arrested seven people, including Wang Zhigang, the dairy company's general manager, on charges of producing and selling toxic food, JCRB.com reported.

Jinfulai was named by the National Food Safety Office last month as a company that produced and sold dairy products tainted with melamine. The office said the company sold products under the "Sanlai" brand name.

Jinfulai did not have a listed phone number or website and could not be reached for comment. Officials in the Yangquan police department and prosecutor's office said they had heard about the case but were unclear about details.

China has been shaken by a series of safety incidents, some of them fatal, involving products such as toxic toothpaste, faulty tires and tainted milk. The troubles underscore the challenges in regulating the multitude of small companies producing consumer goods and food products in China.

In 2008, more than 300,000 children were sickened and six others died after drinking infant formula tainted by melamine — which is high in nitrogen — that suppliers added to fool tests for protein content.

The scandal led to a shake-up of the Chinese milk industry, but toxic dairy products have been sporadically uncovered in markets since then.

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