

Circular From GARD**Date: 22 September 2016**

Egypt Enforces Zero-Tolerance for Ergot in Wheat

An Egyptian agricultural ministry decree of 22 August 2016 states that the country will no longer accept imported wheat containing traces of the ergot fungus.

The recently published ministerial decree No.1421/2016 strengthens Egypt's requirements concerning wheat imports and introduces a zero tolerance for the presence of the ergot fungus in imported wheat. Wheat cargoes can no longer be discharged prior to passing a final inspection by the Egyptian quarantine agency, not even to a warehouse pending the results of a cargo analysis, and even the slightest trace of ergot in a cargo will lead to the cargo being rejected. According to Gard's Egyptian correspondent El Hamamsy Marine Services Ltd., the recent decree cancels the ministerial decree passed earlier this year (No.1117/2016), which permitted for a 0.05 per cent of ergot fungus. The decree applies to all wheat consignments, also to those loaded prior to 22 August 2016.

What is ergot?

The ergot fungus occurs throughout the world and affects many grass species including cultivated cereals. It contains toxic chemicals (alkaloids) that can be harmful to both animals and humans although it is apparently harmless at lower levels. A level of 0.05 per cent is commonly applied as an international standard of ergot in imports and is in line with the "[Codex Alimentarius](#)", a guide published jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organisation (WHO), which sets 0.05 per cent as the maximum acceptable level of ergot in wheat for human consumption. Countries are, however, free to define their own specifications.

Recommendations

Members and clients with vessels trading wheat to Egypt should note that the Egyptian decree No.1421/2016 of 22 August 2016 specifies a zero tolerance level for ergot in imported wheat. Non-compliance with the decree can result in refusal to discharge the cargo in Egypt, which in turn can lead to delays to the vessel or requests for the vessel to call non-Egyptian ports to discharge the cargo. It is recommended that Members and clients seek to protect themselves with appropriate clauses in their contracts to protect themselves against the risk associated with this trade. Indemnification clauses and clauses where the contractual counterpart assumes all risks, liabilities, expenses and losses, including delays, caused by a prohibition to discharge wheat cargo in Egypt should be considered.

Although traces of ergot is not vessel related, owners may wish to reserve their right to refuse to load a cargo if traces of ergot is detected in the cargo at the load port. It is also advisable that owners obtain samples of the cargo prior to loading and discharge, which can be analysed as and when necessary.

For additional information, as well as an English translation of Egypt's ministerial decree No.1421/2016, see "Circular 106: Cargo issues in Egypt" received from The Middle East Survey & Control Office (MESCO) on 5 September 2016.

Source of Information: Gard P&I Club

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