



The Taiwanese drink has been taken off 7-Eleven shelves. Photo: SCMP

Taiwanese milk tea drink recalled off 7-Eleven shelves in Hong Kong

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Popular convenience chain store 7-Eleven has recalled a Taiwanese milk tea beverage across Hong Kong after it was found to contain an unapproved food additive. Chun Cui He's Just Drink – Milk Tea was found to contain L-theanine, which is a substance that is not on the list of permitted food additives in Singapore, the city's Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority said in a statement released on Tuesday.

A spokeswoman for Dairy Farm International, which operates more than 900 7-Eleven shops in Hong Kong, said that the management had decided to recall

all the milk tea products. This action was prompted by the response from the Singapore authorities, and it was following up on the case with the Hong Kong Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

The Taiwanese milk tea beverage has been very popular among Hongkongers since its introduction to the city last year.

A spokeswoman at the authority said that according to the US Food and Drug Administration, the substance L-theanine was “generally recognised as safe”.

“L-theanine will not cause adverse health effects in humans under normal conditions,” she said, as it was considered an “organic compound found primarily in [certain] plant and fungal species”. Hong Kong currently does not have any specific regulations on the substance.

Terence Lau Lok-ting, a professor at the Polytechnic University’s Food Safety Consortium, told *Young Post* that consuming L-theanine in high doses – such as drinking five to six cups of tea or milk tea – would lead to dizziness, headaches and stomach aches.

“The substance is found in many tea products, especially in Taiwan. It’s used to enhance the flavour. It will not cause adverse reactions if you don’t consume it to such a high level. It’s like drinking herbal tea, which enables you to relieve stress and anxiety,” Lau said.

Bifido Group, the manufacturer of the milk tea drink, said in a statement that the food additives it used were imported from Japan, and were legal under Taiwanese law.

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