Electronically FILED by Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles 10/31/2023 10:59 AM David W. Slayton, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court, Reuben Yeroushalmi (SBN 193981) By S. Ruiz, Deputy Clerk 1 reuben@yeroushalmi.com Alexandra Purcell (SBN 347862) 2 alexandra@yeroushalmi.com 3 YEROUSHALMI & YEROUSHALMI* 9100 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 240W 4 Beverly Hills, California 90212 Telephone: (310) 623-1926 5 Facsimile: (310) 623-1930 6 Attorneys for Plaintiff, 7 CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. 8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 9 **COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES** 10 11 CASE NO. 23STCV26596 12 CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC., in the public interest, 13 Plaintiff, COMPLAINT FOR PENALTY AND 14 **INJUNCTION** 15 v. Violation of Proposition 65, the Safe 16 Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement BUMBLE BEE TRADING, a California Corporation; Act of 1986 (Health & Safety Code, § 17 TAKARI INTERNATIONAL, INC., a 25249.5, et seq.) California Corporation; 18 and DOES 1-30, ACTION IS AN UNLIMITED CIVIL 19 CASE (exceeds \$25,000) Defendants. 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 Page 1 of 14 YEROUSHALMI COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATION OF PROPOSITION 65, THE SAFE DRINKING WATER AND TOXIC YEROUSHALMI An Independent ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1986 (HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE § 25249.5, ET SEQ.)

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Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. alleges three causes of action against defendants BUMBLE BEE TRADING, INC., TAKARI INTERNATIONAL, INC., and DOES 1-30 as follows:

THE PARTIES

- 1. Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. ("Plaintiff" or "CAG") is an organization qualified to do business in the State of California. CAG is a person within the meaning of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.11, subdivision (a). CAG, acting as a private attorney general, brings this action in the public interest as defined under Health and Safety Code Section 25249.7, subdivision (d).
- 2. Defendant BUMBLE BEE TRADING, INC. ("BUMBLE BEE") is a California Corporation qualified to do business in California and doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
- 3. Defendant TAKARI INTERNATIONAL, INC. ("TAKARI") is a California Corporation, qualified to do business in California and doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
- 4. Plaintiff is presently unaware of the true names and capacities of defendants DOES 1-30, and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff will amend this Complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each fictitiously named defendant is responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein alleged and the damages caused thereby.
- 5. At all times mentioned herein, the term "Defendants" includes BUMBLE BEE, TAKARI, and DOES 1-30.
- 6. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges that each of the Defendants at all times mentioned herein have conducted business within the State of California.
- 7. Upon information and belief, at all times relevant to this action, each of the Defendants, including DOES 1-30, was an agent, servant, or employee of each of the other

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YEROUSHALMI & YEROUSHALMI *An Independent Association of Law Corporations Defendants. In conducting the activities alleged in this Complaint, each of the Defendants was acting within the course and scope of this agency, service, or employment, and was acting with the consent, permission, and authorization of each of the other Defendants. All actions of each of the Defendants alleged in this Complaint were ratified and approved by every other Defendant or their officers or managing agents. Alternatively, each of the Defendants aided, conspired with and/or facilitated the alleged wrongful conduct of each of the other Defendants.

8. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that at all relevant times, each of the Defendants was a person doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.11, subdivision (b), and that each of the Defendants had ten (10) or more employees at all relevant times.

JURISDICTION

- 9. The Court has jurisdiction over this lawsuit pursuant to California Constitution Article VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 25249.7, which allows enforcement of violations of Proposition 65 in any Court of competent jurisdiction.
- 10. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants named herein because Defendants either reside or are located in this State or are foreign corporations authorized to do business in California, are registered with the California Secretary of State, or who do sufficient business in California, have sufficient minimum contacts with California, or otherwise intentionally avail themselves of the markets within California through their manufacture, distribution, promotion, marketing, or sale of their products within California to render the exercise of jurisdiction by the California courts permissible under traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.
- 11. Venue is proper in the County of Los Angeles because one or more of the instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in the County of Los Angeles and/or

because Defendants conducted, and continue to conduct, business in the County of Los Angeles with respect to the consumer products that are the subject of this action.

BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY FACTS

- 12. In 1986, California voters approved an initiative to address growing concerns about exposure to toxic chemicals and declared their right "[t]o be informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm." Ballot Pamp., Proposed Law, Gen. Elec. (Nov. 4, 1986) at p. 3. The initiative, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at Health and Safety Code Sections 25249.5, et seq. ("Proposition 65"), helps to protect California's drinking water sources from contamination, to allow consumers to make informed choices about the products they buy, and to enable persons to protect themselves from toxic chemicals as they see fit.
- 13. Proposition 65 requires the Governor of California to publish a list of chemicals known to the state to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.8. The list, which the Governor updates at least once a year, contains over 700 chemicals and chemical families. Proposition 65 imposes warning requirements and other controls that apply to Proposition 65-listed chemicals.
- 14. All businesses with ten (10) or more employees that operate or sell products in California must comply with Proposition 65. Under Proposition 65, businesses are: (1) prohibited from knowingly discharging Proposition 65-listed chemicals into sources of drinking water (*Health & Safety Code* § 25249.5), and (2) required to provide "clear and reasonable" warnings before exposing a person, knowingly and intentionally, to a Proposition 65-listed chemical (*Health & Safety Code* § 25249.6).
- 15. Proposition 65 provides that any person "violating or threatening to violate" the statute may be enjoined in any court of competent jurisdiction. *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.7. "Threaten to violate" means "to create a condition in which there is a substantial probability that a violation will occur." *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.11(e).

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- Defendants are also liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation, recoverable in a civil action. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b).
- 16. Plaintiff identified certain practices of manufacturers and distributors of Rabbitfish, Herring, and Jeprox Fish of exposing, knowingly and intentionally, persons in California to Lead and Lead Compounds of such products without first providing clear and reasonable warnings of such to the exposed persons prior to the time of exposure. Plaintiff later discerned that Defendants engaged in such practice.
- 17. On October 1, 1992 the Governor of California added Lead and Lead Compounds ("Lead") to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(b)). Pursuant to Health and Safety Code Sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20) months after addition of Lead to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer, Lead became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements and discharge prohibitions.
- 18. On February 27, 1987, the Governor of California added Lead to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause developmental and reproductive toxicity (Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(c)). Lead is known to the State to cause developmental, female, and male reproductive toxicity. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code Sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20) months after addition of Lead to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause developmental and reproductive toxicity, Lead became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements and discharge prohibitions.

SATISFACTION OF PRIOR NOTICE

- 19. Plaintiff served the following notices for alleged violations of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures:
 - a. On or about July 12, 2023, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures subject to a private action to BUMBLE BEE, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing

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a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the Rabbitfish.

- i. On or about October 13, 2022, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures subject to a private action to BUMBLE BEE, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the Rabbitfish.
- b. On or about July 12, 2023, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures subject to a private action to BUMBLE BEE, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the Herring.
- c. On or about July 12, 2023, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures subject to a private action to BUMBLE BEE, TAKARI, and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the violations allegedly occurred, concerning the Jeprox Fish.
- 20. Before sending the notice of alleged violations, Plaintiff investigated the consumer products involved, the likelihood that such products would cause users to suffer significant exposures to Lead, and the corporate structure of each of the Defendants.
- 21. Plaintiff's notice of alleged violation included a Certificate of Merit executed by the attorney for the noticing party, CAG. The Certificate of Merit stated that the attorney for Plaintiff who executed the certificate had consulted with at least one person with relevant

and appropriate expertise who reviewed data regarding the exposures to Lead, the subject Proposition 65-listed chemical of this action. Based on that information, the attorney for Plaintiff who executed the Certificate of Merit believed there was a reasonable and meritorious case for this private action. The attorney for Plaintiff attached to the Certificate of Merit served on the Attorney General the confidential factual information sufficient to establish the basis of the Certificate of Merit.

- 22. Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations also included a Certificate of Service and a document entitled "The Safe Drinking Water & Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Proposition 65) A Summary." *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.7(d).
- 23. Plaintiff is commencing this action more than sixty (60) days from the dates that Plaintiff gave notice of the alleged violations to BUMBLE BEE, TAKARI, and the public prosecutors referenced in Paragraph 19.
- 24. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that neither the Attorney General, nor any applicable district attorney or city attorney has commenced and is diligently prosecuting an action against the Defendants.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against BUMBLE BEE, and DOES 1-10 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (*Health & Safety Code*, §§ 25249.5, *et seq.*))

Seafood Products I

- 25. Plaintiff repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 24 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.
- 26. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer, distributor, promoter, or retailer of Rabbitfish ("Rabbitfish"), including but not limited to "Isla"; "Dried Salted Rabbitfish (Danggit)"; "Net Wt. 4 oz (113g)"; "Product of the Philippines"; "Distributed and Imported by: Bumble Bee Trading"; "PFLY2421-05AA"; "UPC 4806511315703".
- 27. Rabbitfish contains Lead.

- 28. Defendants knew or should have known that Lead has been identified by the State of California as a chemical known to cause cancer, and reproductive toxicity and therefore was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of the presence of Lead in Rabbitfish within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further discussed above at Paragraph 19a.
- 29. Plaintiff's allegations regarding Rabbitfish concerns "[c]onsumer products exposure[s]," which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs.* tit. 27, § 25602(b). Rabbitfish is a consumer product, and, as mentioned herein, exposures to Lead took place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.
- 30. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that between July 12, 2020 and the present, each of the Defendants knowingly and intentionally exposed California consumers and users of Rabbitfish, which Defendants manufactured, distributed, or sold as mentioned above, to Lead, without first providing any type of clear and reasonable warning of such to the exposed persons before the time of exposure. Defendants have distributed and sold Rabbitfish in California. Defendants know and intend that California consumers will use and consume Rabbitfish, thereby exposing them to Lead. Further, Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that Defendants are selling Rabbitfish under a brand or trademark that is owned or licensed by the Defendants or an entity affiliated thereto; have knowingly introduced Lead into Rabbitfish or knowingly caused Lead to be created in Rabbitfish; have covered, obscured or altered a warning label that has been affixed to Rabbitfish by the manufacturer, producer, packager, importer, supplier or distributor of Rabbitfish; have received a notice and warning materials for exposure from Rabbitfish without conspicuously posting or displaying the warning materials; and/or have actual knowledge of potential exposure to Lead from Rabbitfish. Defendants thereby violated Proposition 65.

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*An Independent Association of Law Corporations 31. The principal routes of exposure are through ingestion, especially direct (oral) ingestion, inhalation, and trans-dermal absorption. Persons sustain exposures primarily by eating and consuming Rabbitfish, and additionally by handling Rabbitfish without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment, or by touching bare skin or mucous membranes with gloves after handling Rabbitfish, as well as through direct and indirect hand to mouth contact, hand to mucous membrane, or even breathing in particulate matter dispersed from Rabbitfish.

- 32. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of Proposition 65 as to Rabbitfish have been ongoing and continuous, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which violates Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution, promotion, and sale of Rabbitfish, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to Lead by Rabbitfish as mentioned herein.
- 33. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each violation of Proposition 65 mentioned herein is ever continuing. Plaintiff further alleges and believes that the violations alleged herein will continue to occur into the future.
- 34. Based on the allegations herein, Defendants are liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per individual exposure to Lead from Rabbitfish, pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 25249.7(b).
- 35. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior to filing this Complaint.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against BUMBLE BEE, and DOES 11-20 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (*Health & Safety Code*, §§ 25249.5, et seq.))

Seafood Products II

36. Plaintiff repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 35 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

- 37. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer, distributor, promoter, or retailer of Herring ("Herring"), including but not limited to "Isla"; "Smoked Fresh Water Herring (Tawilis)"; "Net Wt. 6 oz (170g)"; "Product of the Philippines"; "Distributed and Imported by: Bumble Bee Trading"; "PFLY2221-05PA"; "UPC 4806511315734".
- 38. Herring contains Lead.
- 39. Defendants knew or should have known that Lead has been identified by the State of California as a chemical known to cause cancer, and reproductive toxicity and therefore was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of the presence of Lead in Herring within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further discussed above at Paragraph 19b.
- 40. Plaintiff's allegations regarding Herring concerns "[c]onsumer products exposure[s]," which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs.* tit. 27, § 25602(b). Herring is a consumer product, and, as mentioned herein, exposures to Lead took place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.
- 41. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that between July 12, 2020 and the present, each of the Defendants knowingly and intentionally exposed California consumers and users of Herring, which Defendants manufactured, distributed, or sold as mentioned above, to Lead, without first providing any type of clear and reasonable warning of such to the exposed persons before the time of exposure. Defendants have distributed and sold Herring in California. Defendants know and intend that California consumers will use and consume Herring, thereby exposing them to Lead. Further, Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that Defendants are selling Herring under a brand or trademark that is owned or licensed by the Defendants or an entity affiliated thereto; have knowingly introduced Lead into Herring or knowingly caused

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Lead to be created in Herring; have covered, obscured or altered a warning label that has been affixed to Herring by the manufacturer, producer, packager, importer, supplier or distributor of Herring; have received a notice and warning materials for exposure from Herring without conspicuously posting or displaying the warning materials; and/or have actual knowledge of potential exposure to Lead from Herring. Defendants thereby violated Proposition 65.

- 42. The principal routes of exposure are through ingestion, especially direct (oral) ingestion, inhalation, and trans-dermal absorption. Persons sustain exposures primarily by eating and consuming Herring, and additionally by handling Herring without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment, or by touching bare skin or mucous membranes with gloves after handling Herring, as well as through direct and indirect hand to mouth contact, hand to mucous membrane, or even breathing in particulate matter dispersed from Herring.
- 43. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of Proposition 65 as to Herring have been ongoing and continuous, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which violates Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution, promotion, and sale of Herring, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to Lead by Herring as mentioned herein.
- 44. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each violation of Proposition 65 mentioned herein is ever continuing. Plaintiff further alleges and believes that the violations alleged herein will continue to occur into the future.
- 45. Based on the allegations herein, Defendants are liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per individual exposure to Lead from Herring, pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 25249.7(b).
- 46. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior to filing this Complaint.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

(By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against BUMBLE BEE, TAKARI, and DOES 21-30 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (*Health & Safety Code*, §§ 25249.5, et seq.))

Seafood Products III

- 47. Plaintiff repeats and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 46 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.
- 48. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer, distributor, promoter, or retailer of Jeprox Fish ("Jeprox Fish"), including but not limited to "Takari"; "Oven Dried Jeprox Fish (Smelt Fish)"; "Premium Quality"; "Masarap"; "Wild Caugh From The Indian Ocean"; "Net Wt. 5.3 oz (150 g)"; "Distributed By: Takari International Inc."; "Product of Indonesia"; "JP12O1038"; "UPC 723751711383".
- 49. Jeprox Fish contains Lead.
- 50. Defendants knew or should have known that Lead has been identified by the State of California as a chemical known to cause cancer, and reproductive toxicity and therefore was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of the presence of Lead in Jeprox Fish within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further discussed above at Paragraph 19c.
- 51. Plaintiff's allegations regarding Jeprox Fish concerns "[c]onsumer products exposure[s]," which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs.* tit. 27, § 25602(b). Jeprox Fish is a consumer product, and, as mentioned herein, exposures to Lead took place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.
- 52. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that between July 12, 2020 and the present, each of the Defendants knowingly and intentionally exposed California consumers and users of Jeprox Fish, which Defendants manufactured, distributed, or sold

as mentioned above, to Lead, without first providing any type of clear and reasonable warning of such to the exposed persons before the time of exposure. Defendants have distributed and sold Jeprox Fish in California. Defendants know and intend that California consumers will use and consume Jeprox Fish, thereby exposing them to Lead. Further, Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that Defendants are selling Jeprox Fish under a brand or trademark that is owned or licensed by the Defendants or an entity affiliated thereto; have knowingly introduced Lead into Jeprox Fish or knowingly caused Lead to be created in Jeprox Fish; have covered, obscured or altered a warning label that has been affixed to Jeprox Fish by the manufacturer, producer, packager, importer, supplier or distributor of Jeprox Fish; have received a notice and warning materials for exposure from Jeprox Fish without conspicuously posting or displaying the warning materials; and/or have actual knowledge of potential exposure to Lead from Jeprox Fish. Defendants thereby violated Proposition 65.

- 53. The principal routes of exposure are through ingestion, especially direct (oral) ingestion, inhalation, and trans-dermal absorption. Persons sustain exposures primarily by eating and consuming Jeprox Fish, and additionally by handling Jeprox Fish without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment, or by touching bare skin or mucous membranes with gloves after handling Jeprox Fish, as well as through direct and indirect hand to mouth contact, hand to mucous membrane, or even breathing in particulate matter dispersed from Jeprox Fish.
- 54. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of Proposition 65 as to Jeprox Fish have been ongoing and continuous, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which violates Health and Safety Code Section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution, promotion, and sale of Jeprox Fish, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to Lead by Jeprox Fish as mentioned herein.

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