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Superior Court of California,
County of Alameda

03/05/2024 at 12:21:48 PM

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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES,
INC.,

Plaintiff,

v.

ALMA GOURMET LTD., a New York
corporation; ALMA GOURMET LTD, a
California corporation; AMAZON.COM, INC.,
a Delaware corporation; and DOES 1 through
100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **24CV066469**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)

I.
INTRODUCTION

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2 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by Environmental Health Advocates,
3 Inc. (“Plaintiff”) in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California (“the People”). Plaintiff
4 seeks to remedy Defendants' failure to inform the People of exposure to cadmium and lead, known
5 carcinogens. Defendants expose consumers to cadmium and lead by manufacturing, importing, selling,
6 and/or distributing mushrooms including, but not limited to, Alma Gourmet Wild Morel Mushrooms
7 Whole Dried 2 oz (“Products”). Defendants know and intend that customers will ingest Products
8 containing cadmium and lead.

9 2. Under California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California
10 Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. (“Proposition 65”), “[n]o person in the course of doing
11 business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to
12 cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such
13 individual. . . .” (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.6.)

14 3. California identified and listed cadmium as a chemical known to cause developmental/
15 reproductive toxicity as early as May 1, 1997.

16 4. California identified and listed lead as a chemical known to cause developmental/
17 reproductive toxicity as early as February 27, 1987.

18 5. Defendants failed to sufficiently warn consumers and individuals in California about
19 potential exposure to cadmium and lead in connection with Defendants' manufacture, import, sale, or
20 distribution of Products. This is a violation of Proposition 65.

21 6. Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief compelling Defendants to sufficiently warn consumers
22 in California before exposing them to cadmium and lead in Products. (Health & Safety Code, §
23 25249.7(a).) Plaintiff also seeks civil penalties against Defendants for violations of Proposition 65 along
24 with attorney’s fees and costs. (Health & Safety Code, § 25249.7(b).)

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**II.
PARTIES**

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2 7. Plaintiff ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATES, INC. (“Plaintiff”) is a
3 corporation in the State of California dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through
4 the elimination or reduction of toxic exposure from consumer products. It brings this action in the public
5 interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 25249.7.

6 8. Defendant ALMA GOURMET LTD. ("Alma") is a corporation organized and existing
7 under the laws of New York. Alma is registered to do business in California, and does business in the
8 County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11. Alma
9 manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

10 9. Defendant ALMA GOURMET LTD is a corporation organized and existing under the
11 laws of California. Alma Gourmet Ltd is registered to do business in California, and does business in
12 the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11. Alma
13 Gourmet Ltd manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

14 10. Defendant AMAZON.COM, INC. ("Amazon") is a corporation organized and existing
15 under the laws of Delaware. Amazon is registered to do business in California, and does business in the
16 County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11. Amazon
17 manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

18 11. Plaintiff does not know the true names and/or capacities, whether individual, partners,
19 or corporate, of the Defendants sued herein as DOES 1 through 100, inclusive, and for that reason sues
20 said Defendants under fictitious names. Plaintiff will seek leave to amend this Complaint when the true
21 names and capacities of these Defendants have been ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes and
22 thereon alleges that these Defendants are responsible in whole or in part for the remedies and penalties
23 sought herein.

24 12. At all times mentioned, Defendants were the agents, alter egos, servants, joint venturers,
25 joint employers, or employees for each other. Defendants acted with the consent of the other Co-
26 Defendants and acted within the course, purpose, and scope of their agency, service, or employment.
27 All conduct was ratified by Defendants, and each of them.

1 **III.**
2 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

3 13. California Constitution Article VI, Section 10 grants the Superior Court original
4 jurisdiction in all cases except those given by statute to other trial courts. The Health and Safety Code
5 statute upon which this action is based does not give jurisdiction to any other court. As such, this Court
6 has jurisdiction.

7 14. Venue is proper in Alameda County Superior Court pursuant to Code of Civil
8 Procedure, sections 394, 395, and 395.5. Wrongful conduct occurred and continues to occur in this
9 County. Defendants conducted and continue to conduct business in this County as it relates to Products.

10 15. Defendants have sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California or otherwise
11 purposefully avail themselves of the California market. Exercising jurisdiction over Defendants would
12 be consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

13 **IV.**
14 **CAUSES OF ACTION**

15 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

16 **(Violation of Proposition 65 – Against all Defendants)**

17 16. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained above.

18 17. Proposition 65 mandates that citizens be informed about exposures to chemicals that
19 cause cancer, birth defects, and other reproductive harm.

20 18. Defendants manufactured, imported, sold, and/or distributed Products containing
21 cadmium and lead in violation of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.6 et seq. Plaintiff is informed
22 and believes such violations have continued after receipt of the Notice (defined *infra*) and will continue
23 to occur into the future.

24 19. In manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing Products, Defendants failed to
25 provide a clear and reasonable warning to consumers and individuals in California who may be exposed
26 to cadmium and lead through reasonably foreseeable use of the Products.

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1 20. Products expose individuals to cadmium and lead through direct ingestion. This
2 exposure is a natural and foreseeable consequence of Defendants placing Products into the stream of
3 commerce. As such, Defendants intend that consumers will ingest Products, exposing them to cadmium
4 and lead.

5 21. Defendants knew or should have known that the Products contained cadmium and lead
6 and exposed individuals to cadmium and lead in the ways provided above. The Notice informed
7 Defendants of the presence of cadmium and lead in the Products. Likewise, media coverage concerning
8 cadmium and lead and related chemicals in consumer products provided constructive notice to
9 Defendants.

10 22. Defendants' actions in this regard were deliberate and not accidental.

11 23. More than sixty days prior to naming each defendant in this lawsuit, Plaintiff issued a
12 60-Day Notice of Violation (“Notice”) as required by and in compliance with Proposition 65. Plaintiff
13 provided the Notice to the various required public enforcement agencies along with a certificate of merit.
14 The Notice alleged that Defendants violated Proposition 65 by failing to sufficiently warn consumers in
15 California of the health hazards associated with exposures to cadmium and lead contained in the
16 Products.

17 24. The appropriate public enforcement agencies provided with the Notice failed to
18 commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against Defendants.

19 25. Individuals exposed to cadmium and lead contained in Products through direct ingestion
20 resulting from reasonably foreseeable use of the Products have suffered and continue to suffer
21 irreparable harm. There is no other plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

22 26. Defendants are liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day for each violation
23 of Proposition 65 pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 252497(b). Injunctive relief is also
24 appropriate pursuant to Health and Safety Code, section 25249.7(a).

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1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

2 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants as follows:

3 1. Civil penalties in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation. Plaintiff alleges that
4 damages total a minimum of \$1,000,000;

5 2. A preliminary and permanent injunction against Defendants from manufacturing,
6 importing, selling, and/or distributing Products in California without providing a clear and reasonable
7 warning as required by Proposition 65 and related Regulations;

8 3. Reasonable attorney’s fees and costs of suit; and

9 4. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

10
11 Respectfully submitted:

12 Dated: March 5, 2024

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14 By: 
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21 Environmental Health Advocates, Inc.
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