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Superior Court of California,
County of Alameda

03/07/2024 at 03:52:42 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.

RODEO FOOD DISTRIBUTION, INC., a
California corporation; BALBOA MARKET
HOLDINGS, LLC, a California limited liability
company; and DOES 1 through 100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.: **24CV066849**

**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 lead, a known carcinogen, and
5 mercury, a known reproductive toxin. Defendants expose consumers to lead and mercury by
6 manufacturing, importing, selling, and/or distributing mushrooms including, but not limited to, Oyster
7 Marinated Mushroom (“Products”). Defendants know and intend that customers will ingest Products
8 containing lead and mercury.

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 lead as a chemical known to cause cancer as early as
15 October 1, 1992, and as a chemical known to cause developmental/reproductive toxicity on February
16 27, 1987.

17 4. California identified and listed mercury as a chemical known to cause reproductive
18 toxicity as early as July 1, 1990.

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

22 6. Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief compelling Defendants to sufficiently warn consumers
23 in California before exposing them to lead and mercury in Products. (Health & Safety Code, §
24 25249.7(a).) Plaintiff also seeks civil penalties against Defendants for violations of Proposition 65 along
25 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 Rodeo Food Distribution, Inc. ("Rodeo") is a corporation organized and
7 existing under the laws of California. Rodeo is registered to do business in California, and does business
8 in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section 25249.11. Rodeo
9 manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda County.

10 9. Defendant Balboa Market Holdings, LLC ("Balboa") is a limited liability company
11 organized and existing under the laws of California. Balboa is registered to do business in California,
12 and does business in the County of Alameda, within the meaning of Health and Safety Code, section
13 25249.11. Balboa manufactures, imports, sells, or distributes the Products in California and Alameda
14 County.

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

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

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III.
VENUE AND JURISDICTION

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

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

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

IV.
CAUSES OF ACTION

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of Proposition 65 – Against all Defendants)

15. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained above.

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

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

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

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

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

9 21. Defendants' actions in this regard were deliberate and not accidental.

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

15 23. The appropriate public enforcement agencies provided with the Notice failed to
16 commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against Defendants.

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

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

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13 Respectfully submitted:

14 Dated: March 6, 2024

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