

ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive
JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health
SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 11, 2006

**HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES CONSUMER ALERT ON
RISK OF BOTULISM FROM SMOKED FISH PRODUCT**

The Westchester County Department of Health issued a consumer alert today, warning consumers not to eat "Nina International brand all natural smoked boney fish" sold by Gold Coast Trading Corporation, located at 381 Canal Place in the Bronx.

"Although no illnesses have been reported from consumption of this product, there is some concern that the product could be contaminated with *Clostridium botulinum* spores, which can cause botulism," said Joshua Lipsman, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. "Botulism is a serious and potentially fatal illness. Therefore, we advise consumers not to eat this product."

The Westchester County Health Department issued this consumer alert after receiving notification of the health concerns from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets today. Concerns stem from an analysis by New York State Food Laboratory personnel that found the "smoked boney fish" to be unviscerated or "ungutted" – the gut and internal organs of this processed fish had not been removed. Sale of unviscerated processed fish is prohibited under New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets regulations because *Clostridium botulinum* spores are more likely to be concentrated in the viscera (gut) than any other portion of the fish. Unviscerated processed fish has been linked to previous outbreaks of botulism poisoning.

Symptoms of botulism include blurred or double vision, general weakness, poor reflexes, difficulty swallowing, and respiratory paralysis.

MORE

The product was offered for sale refrigerated, in an uncoded, plastic-wrapped, foam tray. The label indicates it is a product of Ghana, and is imported and distributed by Nina International, Inc., P.O. Box 2176, Hyattsville, MD 20784. It was discovered by a routine inspection of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

For more information, please call the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000, or visit the Health Department web site at www.westchestgov.com/health.

-30-

