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Wegmans Sets Standards for Shrimp

By MARIAN BURROS

WEGMANS has announced that it will become the first supermarket chain to adopt strict environmental and health standards for the farmed shrimp it will sell in its stores.

Shrimp is the most popular seafood in the United States.

A ban on drugs and chemicals.

Most of it is farmed in countries with lax standards, raised in ponds where many chemicals are used to keep the shrimp alive.

Wegmans, a 91-year-old family chain, with 71 stores in New York State, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, said on Monday that all the farmed shrimp it sells will meet standards that Environmental Defense, an advocacy group, helped the chain write.

The company said it agreed to the new standards because environmental groups say shrimp aquaculture has damaged the en-

vironment and contaminated the shrimp.

For their shrimp to be certified for the supermarket, suppliers will not be allowed to use any antibiotics, pesticides or fungicides. Through inspections and audits, they will have to demonstrate that they are not damaging sensitive habitats, that they are treating their wastewater to prevent pollution and are reducing the use of wild fish to feed the shrimp by substituting other ingredients.

Wegmans said it has begun to get its farmed shrimp from a producer in Belize who meets most of its standards and has agreed to meet all of them within a year.

The Food and Drug Administration inspects less than 2 percent of all imported seafood.

"Our regulations are incredibly lax," said Urvashi Rangan, a senior scientist and policy analyst for Consumers Union. "Inspections are very few and far between, and as a result we end up with a lot of contaminated seafood."

Some companies that have been banned from selling shrimp in Japan and Canada because of antibiotic residue in the shrimp continue to sell to the United States, F.D.A. records show.



HOANG DINH NAM/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

ASIAN AQUACULTURE Much of the shrimp sold in the United States is from countries with few standards, like Vietnam.