

《双语：调味料也是造假的！吃的什么东西是靠谱的吗？》

Chinese authorities are investigating nearly 50 factories allegedly manufacturing fake versions of widely used food seasonings and sauces.

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It comes after Beijing News reportedly uncovered the elaborate operation near the city of Tianjin.

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The factories were using unapproved ingredients like industrial salt in seasonings including soy sauce and vinegar, the paper said.

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The products were labelled with brands including Maggi, Knorr, and Nestle.

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The seasonings, which include spices and chicken stock, are commonly used in Chinese cooking and can be widely found across Asia.

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China has been rocked by various food scandals in recent years, with tainted milk powder killing six babies in 2008 and making more than 300,000 children ill.

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The China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA) said in a statement on Monday evening that it had dispatched officers to Tianjin to investigate the claims.

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The Beijing News report said a "fake food seasoning manufacturing hub" had grown unchecked for more than 10 years in the town of Dulu near Tianjin.

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Nearly 50 small factories, operating in a residential area, had been churning out fake seasoning estimated to be worth up to a 100m yuan (\$14.5m) per year.

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Reporters and local police visited the factories last week, acting on a tip-off from a whistleblower.

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Pictures and video taken at the scene show workers making and packaging the products in dirty sheds using homemade equipment like plastic drums and garden hoses.

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The factories were said to have used industrial grade salt unsafe for human consumption. They also recycled by-products from other food manufacturers, and were seen freely using highly regulated ingredients like the artificial sweetener cyclamate.

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Beijing News quoted Nestle's China office as saying that its anti-counterfeit team was looking into the matter, and that "product experts will be helping law enforcement representatives in identifying suspicious products".

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Chinese food brands such as Totole and Donggu, whose products were also faked, said they were either assisting investigations or conducting their own probes.

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Totole added that it had known about the factories since 2007, and its anti-counterfeit team had conducted numerous crackdowns in Dulu, but had been unable to completely stamp them out.

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The sheer scale of the operation revealed in local media shocked a country that is no stranger to food scandals, prompting questions online.

