

Special Inspection of Environmentally Friendly Agricultural Products

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs(MAFRA) and National Agricultural Products Quality Management Service(NAQS) announced that they would conduct a special investigation on environmentally friendly agricultural products on the market in an effort to relieve consumer concerns caused by recent report of inappropriately certified environmentally friendly agricultural products.

This investigation will be mainly conducted for one month, from October 21 to November 20, by using the NAQS's post management team of 120 investigators who will conduct residual pesticide inspection of environmentally friendly agricultural products at department stores and specialty shops across the country and an investigation of the illegal circulation of agricultural products produced on farms whose certification has been canceled. After conducting the investigation, they will immediately stop the circulation of products violating certification standards so that they cannot be circulated as certified products and post the results of the investigation in real time on the NAQS homepage (www.enviagro.go.kr) for consumers to view.

National Agricultural Products Quality Management Service (NAQS) has so far conducted thorough post management investigation of environmentally friendly agricultural products to prevent any products that cannot meet the certification standards from circulating on the market. The investigation team paid surprise visits of inspection to farms cultivating certified products and checked whether they observe the certification standards, including whether they use pesticides and chemical fertilizers in the course of cultivation. The team also investigated the illegal circulation of uncertified products even after those products were released on the market and also collected distributed products and inspected whether there was any residual pesticide on those products. As a result of investigation, they prohibited the circulation of a total of 4,292 products (4,195 products in the production stage and 97 products in the circulation stage) by August 2013.

Meanwhile, NAQS conducted an audit of private certification institutes from February to May in 2013 and took administrative measures on 13 certification institutes that had inappropriate certification services. On October 16, NAQS announced that the seven certification institutes reported to have been booked by the Seoul Western District Prosecutor's Office for inappropriate certification and defrauding of subsidies were also included in the list of institutes suspended by NAQS. In addition, NAQS announced that it immediately canceled any inappropriate certifications given to farms so that their products cannot be circulated on the market as certified products.

With inappropriate certification services by private certification institutes, MAFRA announced that it would postpone the full transfer of the service of certification of environmentally friendly agricultural products to the private sector, which was originally to be made next year, until public trust is recovered through improving the certification system. At present, certification of environmentally friendly agricultural products is conducted by NAQS and 78 private certification institutes. Private certification institutes are responsible for 74% of the total area for certification of environmentally friendly agricultural products. NAQS also announced that it would prepare a plan to reinforce the management of certification of environmentally friendly agricultural products and announced it in late October to prevent inappropriate certification practices from recurring.

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