Shipment of Granny Smith and Gala apples from Californian-based Bidart Bros facility have been recalled in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand following reports of a listeria outbreak.

“The ministry will stop the import of the affected apples while the Health Ministry will check those already in the local market,” Malaysian agriculture minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob told the Strait Times.

Malaysia’s health ministry told the news site that two importers of the particular apples had been contacted to issue a recall after receiving a notice from the US. The USDA published a recall of all Bidart Bros apples on 9 January, which are often sold under the ‘Big Big’ and ‘Granny’s Best’ brands.

Shipments of Bidart Bros apples are also being held at Thailand’s Laem Chabang port in Chon Buri, according to the Bangkok Post.

Wimol Jantratotai, deputy permanent secretary of the agriculture and cooperatives ministry told Thai television that quarantine officials had seized shipments of the apples that were being imported into Thailand by six companies, though no shipments had made it to retail shelves as of yet.

The listeria outbreak began in October 2014, with 32 people across the US reportedly infected with strains of listeria. A nationwide recall of the apples was made after positive results for the listeria pathogen were found at the Bidart Bros Shafter packhouse.

“The results are devastating to the Bidart family,” said Leonard Bidart, president of Bidart Bros, in a statement released 8 January. “As a family-owned grower operating in California since the 1930s, we place safety at the forefront of everything we do. Our hearts go out to all who have been impacted by the apple-related listeriosis outbreak.”

Wider effects

While the ban has only been implemented on Granny Smith and Gala apple from Bidart Bros, Eddie Saw, Washington Apple Commission representative for Malaysia and Singapore, told Fruitnet that fear over a listeria outbreak has impacted all imported apples.

“The news announcements haven’t only affected Washington apples, but all imported apples. The ban, effective from last Saturday, led to many sensationalised headlines on Sunday in local news,” Saw explained. “At the moment, it’s too early to tell what impact it could have on sales, but it won’t be long-term.”

Despite the possible short-term effects of the listeria outbreak on sales of imported apples, Saw says up until now the market for Washington apples has been strong both in Malaysia and Singapore.