

[close window](#)

# Counterfeits Squeezing Sheffield

Counterfeits Squeezing Sheffield

By [Anthony Cronin](#) , Day Business Editor

Published on 7/27/2007 in [Home](#) » [Main Photo](#)

**New London** — Sheffield Pharmaceutical, which bills itself as the birthplace of modern toothpaste, on Thursday enlisted the help of the state's new business advocate to stem a growing tide of counterfeit or substandard Chinese imports threatening one of its most important, and oldest, product lines.

The Broad Street manufacturer, a longtime fixture in the city with ties going back to 1850, produces voluminous amounts of toothpaste, ointments and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals primarily for private-label distribution.

But it says that substandard imports are cutting into its production and presenting public-safety concerns because of the ingredients used in some foreign-made toothpaste.

"I'm very concerned about unfair trade practices," said Rob Simmons, the state's new business advocate, during an extensive tour of the plant. "And here we go again (with tainted Chinese toothpastes). They're not competing, they're cheating."

Despite a recent production spike in Sheffield's toothpaste lines stemming from the recall of thousands of tubes of Chinese-made toothpastes containing a dangerous chemical, Sheffield officials said mounting imports from China, Indonesia and elsewhere are flooding the U.S. market, without any regulatory oversight to ensure the products meet minimum standards.

Earlier this month, state inspectors removed more than 1,100 tubes of contaminated toothpaste from more than a dozen discount stores, including one in New London, made by seven Chinese manufacturers. The confiscated tubes were suspected of containing diethylene glycol, an antifreeze chemical sometimes used by Chinese manufacturers as a cheap sweetener. The chemical can cause liver and kidney damage, or possibly death.

The Sheffield plant this past year produced about 4.5 million pounds of product, from toothpaste to ointments and personal-care products, which represents about 25 million tubes of goods shipped from the Broad Street site.

Thomas H. Faria, Sheffield's president, said his plant routinely is subjected to audits from the federal Food and Drug Administration and says that more than 20 percent of his work force of about 130 are chemists overseeing quality control of all its products. The firm also submits to audits by an independent testing firm.

Faria said some foreign competitors are offering toothpaste to retailers, government agencies or distributors for nine cents a tube. "I can't even get the product (to make the paste) for that," he said.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell has called for greater federal oversight of imports, especially food goods, entering this country. She has urged President Bush to rescind actions to close seven of the 13 nationwide FDA testing laboratories and wants a representative from state government included on a newly created federal safety panel looking into import safety issues.

Faria also said some imports are "dumped" onto the U.S. market at retail prices below their actual production costs.

Over the past few years, Sheffield has increasingly diversified its product line and now makes various creams, ointments and cosmetics for a host of other companies, from other large consumer product companies to leading retailers. The company doesn't disclose its customer base for proprietary reasons.

Simmons said he is troubled by the lack of regulatory oversight for products entering this country and said recent scares about safety issues over pet food, toothpaste and tires manufactured by China necessitate greater scrutiny by state and federal officials.

"The bottom line is that right here in New London we had counterfeit (toothpaste) being sold in the same city where toothpaste was invented," Simmons said. He said he would urge the federal Small Business Administration and the federal Department of Commerce to boost oversight of imported goods, especially foods and pharmaceutical products.

"Some of these overseas vendors are dumping, undercutting and producing substandard products, and at some point we have to push back," Simmons said.

[a.cronin@theday.com](mailto:a.cronin@theday.com)

*Regional*

Total 2 images.



[Buy Photo](#) 

By [Suzanne Ouellette](#)

•*Sheffield Pharmaceutical President Thomas H. Faria, left, listens as state Business Advocate Rob Simmons talks about toothpaste imported from China during a visit to the New London company on Thursday.*



[Buy Photo](#) 

By [Suzanne Ouellette](#)

Connecticut Business Advocate Rob Simmons, right, tours Sheffield Pharmaceutical on Broad Street in New London Thursday with company President Thomas H. Faria.