



Nestle Sued Over Bottled Water Claims

By REUTERS

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BOSTON (Reuters) - Food giant Nestle has duped Americans who buy Poland Spring bottled water into thinking it comes from a lush spring tucked deep in the woods of Maine, according to a class-action lawsuit filed on Wednesday.

Instead, most of the sources for Poland Spring are either surrounded by asphalt parking lots or potentially dangerous contamination, according to the lawsuit filed against a subsidiary of Swiss-based Nestle SA (NESZn.VX).

“Consumers purchase Poland Spring thinking they are getting a higher-quality natural spring water, but our suit will show that Poland Spring is neither natural nor spring water, and in fact comes from sources of a lesser quality than some tap water,” Tom Sobol, an attorney who filed the complaint, said in a statement.

Nestle Waters North America, the Connecticut-based Nestle unit that was slapped with the lawsuit, said it was outraged by the allegations.

“Poland Spring is exactly what we say it is -- natural spring water -- and there are many criteria for that,” said spokeswoman Jane Lazgin. “The truth will come to light. We will certainly defend our good name against these false charges.”

The complaint was filed in Connecticut Superior Court and claims that Nestle falsely labels Poland Spring as coming from “deep in the woods of Maine.” It says the original Poland Spring has not flowed for more than 35 years and the actual sources of the water -- some of which are 30 miles away -- depend on man-made wells that draw more than 6 million gallons of water a year.

Nestle is also accused of falsely advertising Poland Spring as “naturally purified” or “spring water” because the water does not meet the scientific definition for spring water.

In addition to demanding restitution for the general public, the lawsuit seeks to ban Nestle from promoting or advertising products as ``spring water" if they do not meet scientific definitions.

Nestle Waters North America Inc. says on its Web site that it is the largest bottled water company in the United States, with brands including Calistoga, Ozarka and Deer Park in its portfolio.

Poland Spring is distributed throughout the northeastern United States as well as parts of the South and Midwest.