

Prepackaged dried mushroom sample in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 30) that a sample of prepackaged dried mushroom was found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative which is allowed to be used in certain foods, but the name of the additive was not declared on the food label. Members of the public should not consume the affected batches of the product. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batches of the product immediately if they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: (Not available in English)
Brand: (Not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 605 grams
Distributor: (Not available in English)
Best-before date: October 15, 2022

"When following up on an earlier relevant incident, the CFS collected the above-mentioned dried mushroom from a grocery store in Tung Chung for testing. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide. Although the sulphur dioxide level is below the maximum permitted level under the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap. 132BD), the name of the additive was not declared on the food label," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularities, and instructed the vendor to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batches of the product. The distributor has initiated a recall according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call its hotline at 2300 1800 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence," the spokesman added.

Sulphur dioxide is a preservative which can be used in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. Sulphur dioxide is water soluble, and most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headaches and nausea after consumption.

The spokesman reminded the food trade that the use of preservatives in food must comply with the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap. 132BD). Furthermore, the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap. 132W) require that for all prepackaged food for sale in Hong Kong containing sulphite in a concentration of 10 parts per million or more, the functional class of the sulphite and its name shall be specified in the list of ingredients. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six

months' imprisonment upon conviction.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. An investigation is ongoing.

CHP investigates 12 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 11 additional Omicron cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 30, the CHP was investigating 12 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 631 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 630 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Seven of the cases involved mutant strains, the mutation test results of three cases are pending, and the viral loads of the remaining two cases are insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise nine males and three females, aged 1 to 61. Six of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and six from Group A specified places (high-risk). Nine patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport, and three tested positive during quarantine, among which case 12625 is a close contact of imported cases confirmed previously (cases 12594 and 12608) and tested positive at a public hospital.

Among the above-mentioned cases, case 12632 involves a 46-year-old male patient living at Block 1, Grandeur Garden, Chik Fai Street, Tai Wai. He departed Hong Kong on December 17 for the United Kingdom (UK) after he tested negative on December 16. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 27 from the UK by flight AY101 via Finland and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. According to the quarantine requirement for inbound travellers from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance, he underwent quarantine for four days at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre. His sample during quarantine on December 28 tested positive. The patient was asymptomatic and with a Ct value higher than 30. He works in Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Sin Chu Wan Primary School and last went to work on December 16. As a prudent measure, the places where he resided, worked and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a compulsory testing notice (CTN). Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

A total of 122 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 16 to 29). One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that cases 12589, 12592, 12595, 12596, 12597, 12598, 12599, 12600, 12609, 12610 and 12611 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. These cases involved eight males and three females, aged 21 to 59 years old. Four of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC, four tested positive during quarantine and the other three tested negative by arrival testing and later tested positive at community testing centres.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 81 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, the DH invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights in Hong Kong from the relevant original port of the following airlines from December 30 to January 12, 2022:

- Passenger flight (AY101) operated by Finnair arriving in Hong Kong from Helsinki, Finland on December 27 had one passenger who tested positive by arrival testing and two passengers who failed to comply with the requirements specified under Cap. 599H;
- Passenger flight (TK083) operated by Turkish Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Istanbul, Turkey on December 28 had one passenger who tested positive by arrival testing and two passengers who failed to comply with the requirements specified under Cap. 599H; and
- Passenger flight (5J272) operated by Cebu Pacific Air arriving in Hong Kong from Manila, the Philippines on December 29 had three passengers who tested positive by arrival testing.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local COVID-19 cases with mutant strains, the CHP reminded that persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the CTN tomorrow (December 31):

- Hong Kong Sports Institute, 25 Yuen Wo Road, Shatin
- Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon East, 3 Tong Tak Street, Tseung Kwan O
- One South Lane, No. 1 South Lane, Shek Tong Tsui
- Twilight Court, Peninsula Village, 2 Caperidge Drive, Discovery Bay, Lantau Island

- Tower 1, The SeaCrest, 1 Hang Kwai Street, Tuen Mun

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

â€‹The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."

FS welcomes publication of annual report of Process Review Panel for the SFC

The Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, today (December 30) welcomed the publication of the annual report of the Process Review Panel for the Securities and Futures Commission (PRP) which covers the work of the PRP in 2020-21.

"The PRP has conducted a comprehensive review of the internal processes and procedures of the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC). Through reviewing selected cases concerning enforcement, licensing and supervision of intermediaries, and more, the Panel has made a number of observations and recommendations in its annual report which are conducive to the fair and consistent exercise of the regulatory powers by the SFC. The work of the PRP has contributed to enhancing the transparency and accountability of the SFC," Mr Chan said.

"I would like to express my gratitude to the PRP Chairman, Mr Lawrence Lee, and members of the PRP for their hard work," he added.

The PRP is an independent panel established by the Chief Executive to review and advise the SFC on the adequacy of the SFC's internal procedures and its operational guidelines, and to determine whether the SFC has followed its internal procedures for ensuring fairness and consistency.

Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Italy, UK, France and Poland suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 30) that in view of notifications from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the General Veterinary Inspectorate of Poland about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in Rovigo Province of Veneto Region in Italy, Ballinderry Townland of Londonderry County in the United Kingdom (UK), Pyrénées-Atlantiques Department in France and KÄ™piÅ„ski District and Ostrowski District of Wielkopolskie Region in Poland, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 770 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 77 000 poultry eggs from Italy; about 70 tonnes of chilled poultry meat, about 2 970 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 250 000 poultry eggs from the UK; about 40 tonnes of chilled poultry meat, about 3 920 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 240 000 poultry eggs from France; and about 4 070 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 24.82 million poultry eggs from Poland in the first nine months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Italian, British, French and Polish authorities over the issues and will closely monitor information issued by the OIE and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Appointment of second batch of general partners for Hong Kong Growth Portfolio

The Government announced today (December 30) that the Investment Committee of the Hong Kong Growth Portfolio (HKGP) decided to appoint five private equity firms as the second batch of general partners to make

strategic investments for the HKGP. All five firms either have their headquarters based in Hong Kong or have substantial offices established in Hong Kong.

"All appointees have extensive experience in making Hong Kong nexus investments, including projects in Hong Kong and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Given their expertise and experience across sectors and deal types, I am confident that their participation can help build a diversified portfolio for the HKGP," said the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan.

"The Government has appointed eight general partners so far who are used to investing in a wide spectrum of industries including technology, healthcare, logistics and supply chain management, business and financial services, consumer products, etc. We would continue our efforts to identify quality partners to make investments for the future of Hong Kong, and closely monitor the performances of the appointed general partners," Mr Chan added.

The Government set up the HKGP with the aim of reinforcing Hong Kong's status as a financial, commercial and innovation centre and raising Hong Kong's productivity and competitiveness in the long run, while seeking reasonable risk-adjusted returns.