

Canned fried fish fibre sample detected with mercury exceeding legal limit

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (July 3) that a canned fried fish fibre sample was found to contain a metal contaminant, mercury, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the case.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Fried Fish Fiber
Brand: Hsin Tung Yang
Place of origin: Taiwan
Net weight: 200 grams per can
Distributor: B&S Company
Best-before date: April 10, 2021

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from an online shop for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that it contained mercury at a level of 0.81 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 0.5 ppm."

The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. The distributor concerned has initiated a recall according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call the distributor's hotline at 3628 7800 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product.

"Mercury may affect the nervous system, particularly the developing brain. At high levels, mercury can affect foetal brain development, and affect vision, hearing, muscle co-ordination and memory in adults. Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS' Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, alfonso, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children, should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and avoid consumption of the above-mentioned types of fish which may contain high mercury levels to minimise the health risk posed to the foetus, infants and young children by excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," the spokesman said.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination above the

legal limit may be prosecuted and is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

"People are advised to maintain a balanced and varied diet. To avoid health risks posed by excessive intake of metallic contaminants, the general public, especially pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children should avoid eating large or predatory fish," the spokesman said.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the case and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health. Investigation is ongoing.