

CFS announces food safety report for December 2021 and summary of food surveillance programme for 2021

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (January 31) released the findings of its food safety report for December 2021. The results of about 6 100 food samples tested were found to be satisfactory except for 16 unsatisfactory samples which were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.7 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 200 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, and about 4 900 samples were taken for chemical and radiation level tests.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygiene indicators; the chemical tests included testing for pesticides, preservatives, metallic contaminants, colouring matters, veterinary drug residues and others; and the radiation level tests included testing for radioactive caesium and iodine in samples collected from imported food from different regions.

The samples comprised about 2 300 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; about 400 samples of cereals, grains and their products; about 500 samples of meat and poultry and their products; about 800 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; about 700 samples of aquatic and related products; and about 1 400 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The 16 unsatisfactory samples comprised two prepackaged date samples, two prepackaged dried mushroom samples, a prepackaged mushroom sample and a prepackaged spinach noodle sample in breach of the food labelling regulations; a fish ball sample detected with methylmercury at a level which may have contravened the regulations; a grass carp sample found with malachite green; a banana sample detected with pesticide residue exceeding the legal limit; a prepackaged turnip pudding sample detected with a non-permitted preservative; five frozen confection samples detected with coliform bacteria exceeding the legal limit; and a candied winter-melon sample detected with a preservative exceeding the legal limit.

The CFS has taken follow-up actions on the unsatisfactory samples including informing the vendors concerned of the test results, instructing them to stop selling the affected food items and tracing the sources of the food items in question.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food is fit for human consumption and meets legal requirements. Consumers should patronise reliable shops when buying food and maintain a balanced diet to minimise food

risks.

Summary of food surveillance programme for 2021

Concluding the food surveillance programme for 2021, the spokesman said that apart from routine food surveillance, the CFS also conducted a number of targeted, seasonal and popular food surveillance projects.

"In addition to about 9 400 samples of imported Japanese food taken for testing of radiation levels in response to the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in Japan, about 66 300 samples were tested by the CFS last year. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent, which was comparable to the results in recent years. This indicates that food safety has been maintained at a high standard in Hong Kong," he said.

"The exceedances or breaches for most of the unsatisfactory samples were not serious and would not pose adverse health effects to the general public. For individual food items with unsatisfactory test results, the CFS has taken prompt and effective risk management actions to safeguard public health," he said.

He added that in planning the food surveillance programme, the CFS will take into consideration a number of factors such as the food consumption level and the risk of the food concerned in deciding on the number of samples to be tested and the frequency of sampling as well as the testing parameters. In addition, the CFS will also suitably adjust its food surveillance programme and strengthen relevant testing with regard to local and overseas food incidents as well as past surveillance data, in particular breaches of regulatory requirements that occurred more frequently, so as to safeguard food safety in Hong Kong.