

CFS announces food safety report for June

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 31) released the findings of its food safety report for last month. The results of about 14 100 food samples tested were satisfactory except for 18 samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 700 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 4 200 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 8 200 (including about 7 500 taken from food imported from Japan) were collected to test radiation levels.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygienic indicators, while the chemical tests included pesticides, preservatives, metallic contaminants, colouring matters, veterinary drug residues and others.

The samples comprised about 3 900 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; 600 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 1 800 samples of aquatic and related products; 1 200 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 1 000 samples of cereals, grains and their products; and 5 600 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The 18 unsatisfactory samples comprised seven vegetable samples detected with pesticide residues exceeding the legal limits; a vegetable sample and two dried mushroom samples detected with excessive cadmium; two anchovy fillet samples detected with histamine; a chilled goose sample and a frozen tiger prawn sample detected with veterinary drug residues; a fresh beef sample found to contain sulphur dioxide; a honey sample found to contain a trace amount of an antibiotic; a packed milk drink sample found to contain excessive *Bacillus cereus*; and a fried pad thai noodle sample found to contain excessive coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms.

The CFS has taken follow-up action 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.

Since the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap 132CM) came into effect on August 1, 2014, as of June 30 this year, the CFS has taken over 147 400 food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing for pesticide residues. The overall unsatisfactory rate is less than 0.2 per cent.

The spokesman added that excessive pesticide residues in food may arise from the trade not observing Good Agricultural Practice, e.g. using excessive

pesticides and/or not allowing sufficient time for pesticides to decompose before harvesting. The maximum residue limits (MRLs) of pesticide residues in food set in the Regulation are not safety indicators. They are the maximum concentrations of pesticide residues to be permitted in a food commodity under Good Agricultural Practice when applying pesticides. In this connection, consumption of food with pesticide residues higher than the MRLs will not necessarily lead to any adverse health effects.

Histamine is commonly found in certain kinds of fish such as tuna, sardine, mackerel and anchovy, as a result of bacterial spoilage. Consumption of fish containing high levels of histamine can cause food-borne intoxication. Symptoms of histamine poisoning include tingling and burning sensation around the mouth, facial flushing and sweating, nausea, vomiting, headache, palpitations, dizziness and rash. The onset of intoxication symptoms is within a few hours after consumption and these symptoms will normally disappear in 12 hours without long-term effect.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food for sale 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.