

CFS announces food safety report for October

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 29) released the findings of its food safety report for the last month. The results of about 16 400 food samples tested were satisfactory except for 21 samples and they were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 800 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 5 500 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 9 100 (including about 8 400 taken from food imported from Japan) were collected to test radiation levels.

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

The samples comprised about 4 200 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; 1 100 samples of cereals, grains and their products; 1 300 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 1 200 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 2 000 samples of aquatic and related products; and 6 600 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The 21 unsatisfactory samples comprised eight frozen confection samples detected with counts of hygiene indicator organisms exceeding the legal limits; three crab samples, one vegetable sample and one rice sample detected with excessive cadmium; two silver cod samples detected with mercury exceeding the legal limit; a fresh beef sample found to contain sulphur dioxide; a pickled green mustard sample detected with excessive preservative; a roast drumstick sample found to contain excessive *Bacillus cereus*; a vegetable sample detected with excessive pesticide residue; a nutmeg powder sample contaminated with aflatoxins; and a chilled chicken sample found to contain veterinary drug residue.

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 October 31 this year, the CFS has taken over 189 500 food samples at 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 limit (MRL) of pesticide residues in food is not a safety indicator. It is the maximum concentration 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 MRL will not necessarily lead to any adverse health effects.

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.