

CFS announces food safety report for September

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (October 31) released the findings of its food safety report for last month. The results of about 13 800 food samples tested were satisfactory except for 10 samples and they were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 400 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 3 800 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 8 600 (including about 8 000 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 4 100 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; 700 samples of cereals, grains and their products; 800 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 1 100 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 1 600 samples of aquatic and related products; and 5 500 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The 10 unsatisfactory samples comprised two vegetable samples detected with excessive cadmium, two fresh beef samples detected with sulphur dioxide, a chilled beef sample and a live abalone sample detected with chloramphenicol, a fruit sample found to contain excessive pesticide residue, a swordfish sashimi sample detected with excessive mercury, a sample of dried Chinese white cabbage found to contain excessive preservative, and a canned fried dace sample detected with a trace amount of malachite green.

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 September 30 this year, the CFS has taken over 186 700 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.