

CFS announces test results of Summer Food Surveillance Programme (with photo)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (August 30) released the findings of its Summer Food Surveillance Programme 2024. The results of about 1 910 food samples tested were satisfactory except for three samples that had been announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.8 per cent. A CFS spokesman reminded members of the public to remain vigilant and pay more attention to food safety and environmental hygiene as the hot and humid climate of the long summer in Hong Kong facilitates the multiplication of bacteria.

The spokesman said, "The CFS collected about 1 910 samples from market stalls, restaurants, food factories, fresh provision shops, online vendors (including online retailers and online food delivery platforms), hawkers and others for tests."

The samples comprised 176 samples of dairy products and frozen confections, 126 samples of cut fruit and salads, 129 samples of desserts and drinks, 85 samples of sandwiches, 273 samples of cold cuts or cooked meat products, 605 samples of aquatic products (such as sushi and sashimi, fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other edible aquatic animals) and 518 samples of other ready-to-eat foods.

The spokesman said that about 1 810 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, 30 samples for tests of metallic contaminants and 70 samples for tests of veterinary drug residues. Samples tested for veterinary drug residues were all satisfactory. As for the tests of metallic contaminants, except for one imported swordfish sashimi sample detected with methylmercury at a level exceeding the legal limit, the remaining samples were all satisfactory. As for the microbiological tests, except for two bottled preserved bean curd samples found to contain excessive *Bacillus cereus*, the remaining samples were all satisfactory. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.8 per cent.

The CFS has announced the test results of the unsatisfactory samples and conducted follow-up actions, including instructing the vendors concerned to stop selling the relevant food and remove from shelves the affected products, and tracing the sources of the food items in question.

The spokesman reminded members of the public in particular that raw or undercooked foods are high-risk foods as there is not any, or inadequate, heat treatment to eliminate the microorganisms present that can pose risks to human health. Raw or undercooked foods are also associated with the risk of contracting antimicrobial resistance (AMR) microorganisms. Although these AMR microorganisms may not cause illnesses, they may transfer their antibiotic

resistance genes to other bacteria inside the human body, therefore affecting the effectiveness of the future use of antibiotics when needed. Susceptible populations such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly and people with weakened immunity (e.g. people with chronic diseases or those on antibiotics treatment, antacid and long-term steroids or drugs given to prevent transplant rejection) are of higher risk of being infected or having complications if they consume raw or undercooked foods due to their health status. They should therefore avoid eating raw and undercooked foods.

Members of the public should pay attention to food safety, especially in summer, and observe the following Five Keys to Food Safety in order to reduce the risk of foodborne diseases:

- choose (choose safe raw materials);
- clean (keep hands and utensils clean);
- separate (separate raw and cooked food);
- cook (cook thoroughly); and
- safe temperature (keep food at a safe temperature).

Members of the public are also reminded to dine out in licensed and hygienic restaurants. Food premises selling sushi and sashimi or other high-risk foods require a special permit. The public should patronise only those with relevant licences or permits issued by the FEHD.

