CFS continues to follow up on US powdered infant formula with possible contamination of Cronobacter sakazakii and Salmonella Newport

A spokesman for the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (February 21) that the CFS has been following up on the notifications from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States (US) that authorities are investigating several cases of infant infections of Cronobacter sakazakii (previously named Enterobacter sakazakii) and Salmonella Newport, suspected to be related to the consumption of several kinds of powdered infant formula produced from Abbott Nutrition's Sturgis, Michigan facility. Follow-up investigation of the CFS found that the affected products had been imported into Hong Kong for export to the Mainland. The products were not put on sale in Hong Kong.

According to the information from the US FDA, the affected Abbott Nutrition products are Similac, Alimentum, and EleCare powdered infant formulas. The authorities advised consumers not to use the concerned products if:

(1) the first two digits of the code are 22 through 37; and
(2) the code on the container contains K8, SH or Z2; and
(3) the expiration date is April 2022 or later.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "Upon receiving the notification from the FDA earlier, the CFS has followed up with the sole importer (Abbott Laboratories Limited) of the product concerned and major local importers in Hong Kong. The CFS has also contacted major local retailers and conducted sales checks at local outlets. No affected product was found available for sale so far,"

"The CFS continued to follow up the incident. Further investigation found that the sole importer had imported the affected infant formulae including Similac Pro-Advanced Powderã€UK Elecare HMO and UK Alimentum HMO into Hong Kong which had been exported to the Mainland. Some products intended to be exported to the Mainland are currently stored inside a warehouse after import and have not entered the local market. The CFS has inspected the warehouse and marked and sealed the products concerned. The operator was also instructed to dispose of all the remaining products concerned and the CFS has notified the Mainland authorities concerned of the incident."

The CFS has collected over 210 samples of infant milk powder for microbiologcial testing (including Cronobacter sakazakii and Salmonella) in the past three years (2019-2021) under its routine food surveillance programme. The results were all satisfactory.

Powdered infant formula is not a sterile product which may be contaminated with pathogens such as salmonella and Cronobacter sakazakii. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health Organization advise that powdered infant formula should be prepared with boiled water that is no cooler than 70 degree Celsius which can significantly reduce the risk. Reconstituted powdered infant formula should then be cooled to feeding temperature and consumed immediately. Reconstituted powdered infant formula that has not been consumed within two hours should be discarded. On the other hand, for high-risk infants, including pre-term infants, infants less than two months of age, low-birth-weight infants (< 2.5 kilograms) and immunocompromised infants etc, who are not breastfed, caregivers should use commercially sterile liquid formula whenever possible.

The CFS will continue to follow up the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.