

Coconut oil sample detected with harmful contaminant benzo[a]pyrene

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (February 20) that a bottled coconut oil sample was detected to contain a harmful contaminant, benzo[a]pyrene (BaP). Members of the public are advised to stop consuming the affected batch of the product. The trade should stop using or selling the affected batch of the product should they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Organic Refined Coconut Oil
Brand: Nutiva
Place of origin: Philippines
Distributor/importer: Eastern Zone Co Ltd
Volume: 680 millilitres/23 ounces per bottle
Best-before date: May 1, 2020

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a supermarket in Sheung Wan for testing. The test result showed that the sample contained BaP at a level of 47 micrograms per kilogram ($\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$), exceeding the action level of $10\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$ established by the CFS after consulting the Expert Committee on Food Safety."

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the distributor/importer concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product, and initiate a recall immediately. Members of the public may call the distributor/importer's hotline at 2965 6422 or 2965 6423 during office hours for enquiries about the recall.

BaP is a kind of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are contaminants ubiquitous in the environment. BaP is toxic to genes and can cause cancer in humans. The International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization has classified BaP as "carcinogenic to human". The intake of BaP should be avoided as far as practicable.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, must be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

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