

Consumers urged not to consume prepackaged ginger powder contaminated with aflatoxins

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 5) urged the public not to consume a batch of prepackaged ginger powder manufactured in India as it was found contaminated with aflatoxins. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected product immediately if they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Organic Ginger Powder
Brand: SpiceBox
Place of origin: India
Distributor: SpiceBox Organics Limited
Net weight: 50 grams per pack
Best-before date: March 30, 2019

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a shop in the Mid-levels for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The results showed that it contained aflatoxins at a level of 20 micrograms (μg) per kilogram."

Under the Harmful Substances in Food Regulation (Cap 132 AF), the maximum permitted concentration for aflatoxins in food (except for peanuts or peanut products) is $15\mu\text{g}/\text{kg}$.

The spokesman said, "The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and the vendor has removed from shelves and stopped sale of the affected product according to the CFS' instructions. Should there be sufficient evidence, prosecution will be instituted. The Centre is also tracing the source and distribution of the affected product."

The World Health Organization (WHO)'s International Agency for Research on Cancer classified naturally occurring aflatoxins as carcinogenic to humans, and the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives advised that intake of aflatoxins should be reduced to levels as low as reasonably possible although no health-based guidance value has been set. Aflatoxins can lead to liver cancer after long-term ingestion, and the risk for hepatitis B carriers is relatively high.

The spokesman urged members of the public who had bought the affected batch of the product to stop consuming it. To avoid excessive intake of mycotoxins, people should maintain a balanced and varied diet to minimise the risk from a small range of food items, and to avoid consuming food that looks mouldy or damaged.

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