

Dried Chinese white cabbage sample detected with excessive preservative

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (September 5) that a sample of loose-packed dried Chinese white cabbage was found to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the case.

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a stall in Electric Road Market, North Point, for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 1 660 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 500 ppm," a CFS spokesman said.

The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and has requested it to stop sale of the affected batch of the product. The Centre is tracing the source of the product concerned.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. This preservative is of low toxicity. As it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea after consumption.

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The spokesman reminded the food trade that the use of preservatives in food must comply with the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD). Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

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