

Durian sample detected with colouring matter curcumin

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (August 9) announced that a durian sample was detected with curcumin, a colouring matter which should not be added to fruit and vegetables in a raw and unprocessed state. The CFS is following up on the case.

"Following up on a food complaint, the CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a supermarket in Ma On Shan for testing. The test result showed that curcumin was detected in the husk of the sample," a CFS spokesman said.

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

The spokesman said, "Turmeric is a rhizomatous herbaceous perennial plant and curcumin is a natural food colouring extracted from turmeric. According to the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations (Cap 132H), although colouring matter can be added to processed food, it should not be added to meat, game, poultry, fish, fruit or vegetables in a raw and unprocessed state. Upon conviction, offenders shall be liable to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

"Although curcumin is a food colouring of low toxicity, the law has a stringent requirement on its use. The trade should observe the relevant laws and regulations, follow Good Manufacturing Practice and use food additives in an appropriate manner."

The spokesman noted that generally speaking, removing the shells of hard-shelled fruits upon consumption can reduce the intake of colouring matter.

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