

Excessive cadmium and methylmercury found in crab sample and escolar sample respectively

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (May 14) announced that a crab sample and a escolar sample were detected with cadmium and methylmercury respectively, which are metallic contaminants, at levels exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the incidents.

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned crab sample and escolar sample at the import levels for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test results showed that the crab sample contained cadmium at a level of 10.4 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 2 ppm; while the escolar sample contained methylmercury at a level of 2.57 ppm, exceeding the legal limit of 0.5 ppm," a spokesman for the CFS said.

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities and instructed them to stop sales and remove from shelves the affected products. The CFS is also tracing the sources and distribution of the products concerned.

"Long-term excessive intake of cadmium may affect the kidney functions. Methylmercury is the major form of mercury in fish. At high levels, mercury can affect foetal brain development, and affect vision, hearing, muscle co-ordination and memory in adults. Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS's Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, alfonso, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning a pregnancy and young children should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and avoid consumption of the above-mentioned types of fish to minimise excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," the spokesman added.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap. 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination above the legal limit is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

â€‹The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action. Investigations are ongoing.