

Excessive sulphur dioxide found in longan sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 7) announced that a longan sample was detected with sulphur dioxide, a preservative, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the incident.

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned longan sample from a supermarket in Causeway Bay for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 239.8 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 50 ppm," a CFS spokesman said.

The spokesman said that the CFS has informed the retailer concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale of the affected product. The CFS is also tracing the source of the product concerned.

According to the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap. 132BD), any person who sells food with preservatives above the legal limit is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and meat products. This preservative is water soluble, and most of it can be removed from the shell of the longan through washing and gently rubbing the longan under running water. However, individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience symptoms of shortness of breath, headache or nausea.

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