

Excessive sulphur dioxide found in raisin sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (June 22) announced that a raisin 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 raisin sample from a supermarket in Tai Po for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 3 500 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 1 500 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. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence.

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 of low toxicity. As it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. 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.