

## [FEHD and DH follow up on samples of imported fish and its packaging surface tested positive for COVID-19 \(with photo\)](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (August 13) that a notification was received from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) yesterday that samples of imported fish and its packaging were found to be positive for the COVID-19 virus during precautionary testing for the first time. The FEHD conducted deep cleansing and disinfection last night at a fish stall, which had processed the batch of fish concerned, at To Kwa Wan Market, as well as the entire market to safeguard the health and safety of market stall tenants and the public.

The CFS collected on August 10 ten pomfret fish surface samples and packaging samples from a batch of 10 boxes of chilled pomfret fish (total of around 270 kg) imported from Indonesia via flight. Two pomfret fish surface samples and one packaging sample were found to be positive for the COVID-19 virus and the viral load was low. The batch of fish concerned was imported from an Indonesian exporter PT. Perishable Logistics Indonesia.

Upon learning the test results, the CFS apart from immediately stepped up the sampling of the frozen foods and their packaging imported to Hong Kong from the exporter concerned for testing, it also conducted investigation and confirmed that the batch of chilled pomfret fish had been sold to Aberdeen Wholesale Fish Market and Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Fish Market, and further distributed to five retailers. The CHP and the FEHD have already conducted further investigations on the vendors and locations concerned to identify the individuals who had contact with the affected product for undergoing epidemiological assessment; arrange quarantine or compulsory testing for individuals concerned; trace and handle the affected product; and conduct deep cleansing and disinfection at the locations. While investigation is ongoing, the CHP, as at last night, arranged quarantine for nine relevant staff members who had made contact with the contaminated product. Meanwhile, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department has also conducted deep cleansing and disinfection at Aberdeen Wholesale Fish Market and Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Fish Market immediately upon notification.

To prevent the import of the COVID-19 virus through imported frozen foods, the CFS has stepped up precautionary testing measures since mid-2020, including enhanced testing of various types of frozen foods and their packaging imported from different countries/regions, which involves taking samples at the Airport Food Inspection Offices and cold stores of importers. Up to now, over 14 000 samples of foods and their packaging were collected for testing of the novel coronavirus and only the above pomfret fish and packaging samples were found to be positive. The CFS will continue the

sampling of imported frozen foods and their packaging for testing.

The COVID-19 virus is predominantly transmitted through droplets and cannot multiply in food or food packaging. According to current scientific knowledge, the World Health Organization and food safety assessment authorities in overseas countries considered that it is unlikely that a novel coronavirus can be transmitted to humans via food consumption. Nevertheless, members of the public should always observe personal, food and environmental hygiene. The CFS reminds the public to pay attention to the following:

- \*Always keep hands clean, particularly before touching the mouth, nose or eyes;
- \*Rub hands with liquid soap for at least 20 seconds when washing before and after handling chilled and frozen food and its packaging, if any; after going to the toilet; and before eating;
- \*Handle raw and cooked food separately, and pay special attention when handling raw meat and offal, to avoid cross-contamination of food; and
- \*Cook food thoroughly and avoid consuming raw or undercooked animal products.

The FEHD spokesman said that the global pandemic situation remains severe, and in the face of challenges posed by mutant strains, citizens are counted on to fulfil their civic responsibility and receive vaccines extensively in order to strengthen the immunity barrier in Hong Kong. Practitioners of catering businesses, cold stores, other licensed food premises, markets and licensed hawkers are important stakeholders of Hong Kong's food supply, vaccination is of utmost importance to protecting their as well as the public's health and ensuring the normal operation of the relevant businesses. The FEHD has written to them to encourage them to receive vaccination. The spokesman appealed to individuals from the trades to get vaccinated as soon as possible in support of the "Early Vaccination for All" campaign proactively, with a view to protecting themselves and their families.

