

Import and sale of raw oysters harvested in zone 56.09.3, Morbihan Department, France suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (February 23) that the import into and sale in Hong Kong of raw oysters harvested in zone 56.09.3, Morbihan Department, France have been suspended with immediate effect.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS received a notification from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission that raw oysters harvested in abovementioned area in France which were suspected to be contaminated with norovirus was under recall. According to the information provided by RASFF, a local importer, Tasty Seafood and Fine Food Limited, had imported the raw oysters concerned. The CFS immediately contacted the importer concerned for follow-up and the importer confirmed that it had imported the affected oysters. For the sake of prudence, the CFS has immediately suspended the import into and sale within Hong Kong of raw oysters harvested in the area concerned."

The spokesman said that preliminary investigation by CFS found that 135 kilograms of the affected oysters were imported by the importer and some were distributed. The CFS has instructed the importer to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected product, and initiate a recall. Members of the public may call the importer's hotline at 3590 4849 during office hours to enquire about the recall. The trade should also stop selling the affected product if they possess it.

"As oysters feed by filtering a large volume of seawater, pathogens such as norovirus, chemical contaminants and natural toxins can accumulate in them if they are grown in or harvested from contaminated water. Regardless of the season or the region in which the oysters are harvested, consuming oysters, particularly raw or partially cooked ones, carries an inherent food safety risk. Susceptible groups, such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems or liver diseases, should avoid eating raw oysters," the spokesman said.

The CFS will inform the French authorities of the import suspension and notify the local trade. It will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health.