

Import and sale of shellfishes harvested in production areas 35.11 and 35.06 in France suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 10) that the import into and sale within Hong Kong of shellfishes harvested in production areas 35.11 and 35.06 in France have been suspended with immediate effect.

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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 shellfishes harvested in the abovementioned areas which were suspected to be contaminated with norovirus were under recall. For the sake of prudence, the CFS has immediately suspended the import into and sale within Hong Kong of all shellfishes harvested in the two areas concerned."

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Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately followed up with major local importers and retailers. Preliminary investigation found that a local importer had imported not ready-to-eat mussels from the abovementioned areas into Hong Kong which were on sale in its supermarkets. For the sake of prudence, the importer concerned had already voluntarily stopped sale and removed from shelves of the affected product. The CFS is tracing the distribution of the affected product. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected product harvested in the abovementioned areas concerned immediately if they possess them.

"Shellfish (including mussels) are filter feeders which ingest food and absorb nutrients through filtering sea water. The shellfish may be contaminated with viruses if nourished with contaminated water. One may be infected by norovirus or other pathogenic microorganism if consuming undercooked shellfish which is contaminated. So, shellfish should be thoroughly cooked before consumption. Young children, elderly people, pregnant women and others with weakened immune systems should pay special attention when consuming shellfish," the spokesman said.ã€ã€ã€

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