

Pesticide residues exceed legal limits in mango sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 12) announced that a mango sample was found to contain pesticide residues at levels exceeding the legal limits. The CFS is following up on the case.

A CFS spokesman said, "The CFS collected the mango sample from an online shop for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained esfenvalerate and fenvalerate both at a level of 0.35 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the maximum residue limits (MRLs) of the two pesticides (both at the level of 0.2 ppm).

"Based on the levels of pesticide residues detected in the sample, adverse health effects will not be caused under usual consumption," he added.

Generally speaking, rinsing fruit thoroughly under running water can reduce the level of pesticide residues. To further reduce the intake of pesticide residues, the fruit can be peeled.

Any person who imports, manufactures or sells any food not in compliance with the requirements of the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap 132CM) concerning pesticide residues commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

Since the regulation came into effect on August 1, 2014, the CFS has taken over 148 500 samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for testing for pesticide residues. Together with the unsatisfactory sample announced today, a total of 227 food samples (including 219 vegetable and fruit samples) have been detected as having excessive pesticide residues. The overall unsatisfactory rate is less than 0.2 per cent.

The spokesman added that excessive pesticide residues in food may arise from the trade not observing Good Agricultural Practice, e.g. using excessive pesticides and/or not allowing sufficient time for pesticides to decompose before harvesting. The MRLs of pesticide residues in food set in the Regulation are not safety indicators. They are the maximum concentrations of pesticide residues to be permitted in a food commodity under Good Agricultural Practice when applying pesticides. In this connection, consumption of food with pesticide residues higher than the MRLs will not necessarily lead to any adverse health effects.

The CFS will follow up on the unsatisfactory results, including tracing the source of the food in question and taking samples for testing. Investigation is ongoing.