

Pickled green mustard sample detected with excessive preservative and in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 16) that a prepackaged pickled green mustard sample was found to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide, at a level exceeding the legal limit, and the preservative was not declared on the food label. The CFS is following up on the case.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Sour Pickled Green Mustard
Brand: Leng Heng
Manufacturer: Leng Heng Agri Foods Co Ltd
Place of origin: Thailand
Net weight: 350 grams per pack
Best-before date: April 26, 2021

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a stall in Electric Road Market in North Point for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 145 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 100 ppm. The preservative was also not declared on the food label of the sample," a CFS spokesman said.

The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale of the affected batch of the product. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. This preservative is of low toxicity. As it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea after consumption.

The spokesman reminded the food trade that the use of preservatives in food must comply with the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD). Furthermore, the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap 132W) require that the food ingredients of all prepackaged food for sale in Hong Kong should be listed out on the list of ingredients. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.