

Prepackaged date sample in breach of food labelling regulations

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (December 10) said that a kind of prepackaged date has been found to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide, that was not declared on the product's food label, in breach of the food labelling regulations. Follow-up is in progress.

Product details are as follows:

Product: Dates

Brand: Not available in English

Manufacturer: Not available in English

Net content: 1 catty/604 grams

Best-before date: December 28, 2019

"The CFS took the above-mentioned sample from a shop in Sham Shui Po for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide which was undeclared on its food label. The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. Should there be sufficient evidence, prosecution will be instituted. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product," a CFS spokesman said.

The spokesman pointed out that although the level of sulphur dioxide contained (230 parts per million) in the above-mentioned sample is within the legal limit, susceptible individuals who are allergic to sulphur dioxide may experience breathing difficulties, headache and nausea if they consume this kind of food.

The spokesman urged the trade to observe the relevant laws and regulations. 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 in the list of ingredients. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment.

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