

Prepackaged dried mushroom and spinach noodle samples in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 1) that a sample of prepackaged dried mushroom and a sample of prepackaged spinach noodles were found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative which is allowed to be used in certain foods, but the functional class and the name of the additive were not declared on the food labels. Members of the public should not consume the affected batches of the products. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batches of the products immediately if they possess them.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: (Not available in English)
Brand: (Not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 605 grams
Distributor: (Not available in English) (recall hotline: 2300 1800)
Best-before date: August 31, 2022

Product name: (Not available in English)
Brand: Kam Hing
Place of origin: Hong Kong
Net weight: 300 grams
Distributor: Kam Hing Noodles Food Co Ltd (recall hotline: 2385 2567)
Best-before date: December 31, 2022

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned dried mushroom and spinach noodle samples from two grocery stores in Tung Chung and Yau Ma Tei respectively for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test results showed that the samples contained sulphur dioxide. Although the sulphur dioxide levels are below the maximum permitted level under the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap. 132BD), the name of the additive was not declared on the food label of the dried mushroom sample while the functional class and the name of the additive were not declared on the food label of the spinach noodle sample," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities, and instructed them to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batches of the products. The above-mentioned distributors have initiated recalls according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call their hotlines at 2300 1800 (for dried mushroom) and 2385 2567 (for spinach noodles) during office hours for enquiries about the recalls," the spokesman added.

Sulphur dioxide is a preservative which can be used in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. Sulphur dioxide is water soluble, and 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 for all prepackaged food for sale in Hong Kong containing sulphite in a concentration of 10 parts per million or more, the functional class of the sulphite and its name shall be specified in 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.