

Prepackaged frozen lobster 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 (September 13) that a sample of prepackaged frozen lobster was found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative, at a level exceeding the legal limit, and the functional class and name of the additive were not declared on the food label. Members of the public should not consume the affected batch of the product. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batch of the product immediately if they possess it.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Frozen Raw Caribbean Spiny Lobster Tail
Brand: Royal Banquet
Distributor: The Food Source Ltd
Place of origin: Brazil
Net weight: 340 grams per pack
Best-before date: May 3, 2022

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample of frozen lobster from an online shop for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 704 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 100 ppm. The functional class and name of the additive were also not declared on the food label," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity, and instructed the vendor concerned to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. The distributor concerned has initiated a recall according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call its hotline at 3422 8718 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product," 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 ppm 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.