

Prepackaged fruit juice sample in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 12) that a sample of prepackaged fruit juice was found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative which is allowed to be used in fruit juice, but the functional class and name of such 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: 100% PRESSED PEACH & GRAPE JUICE
Brand: DON SIMON
Place of origin: Spain
Distributor: Top Label International Limited
Volume: 1 litre per pack
Best-before date: September 17, 2020

"The CFS collected the abovementioned sample from a supermarket in North Point for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide. Although the sulphur dioxide level is below the maximum permitted level under the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap 132BD), the functional class and name of such additive were 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 and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. The distributor concerned has initiated a recall according to CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call the distributor's hotline at 2627 3627 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 of low toxicity used in a variety of foods including fruit juice, dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. However, susceptible individuals who are allergic to this preservative may experience breathing difficulties, headaches 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. An investigation is ongoing.