

Prepackaged preserved mustard greens and preserved plums samples in breach of food labelling regulation

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 10) that a sample of prepackaged preserved mustard greens and two samples of prepackaged preserved plums were found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative which is allowed to be used in certain foods, but the functional class and/or the name of the additive were not declared on the food labels. Members of the public should not consume the affected products. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected products immediately if they possess them.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Preserved Mustard Cabbage
Brand: (Not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 227 grams
Best-before date: December 30, 2024
Distributor: EDENS TRADING COMPANY
Hotline: 2668 9728

Product name: Preserved Plum King
Brand: FRUIT AREA
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 30 grams
Best-before date: April 28, 2024
Sole agent: Foon Tai Trading Company Limited
Hotline: 2553 9668

Product name: Wake Up Kiss Plum (Snow Plum)
Brand: MAG MAG
Place of origin: Thailand
Net weight: 186 grams
Best-before date: May 3, 2024
Distributor: Ciao International Limited
Hotline: 2755 7777

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned samples from an online vendor and a supermarket and a retail outlet in Sham Shui Po 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 functional class and/or the name of the additive were not declared on the food labels of the samples," a spokesman for the CFS said.

"The CFS has informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities and instructed them to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected products. The distributors and sole agent concerned have initiated recalls according to the CFS's instructions. Members of the public may call the respective hotlines above 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 incidents and take appropriate action. Investigations are ongoing.