

Prepackaged preserved mustard 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 (November 27) that a prepackaged preserved mustard sample was found to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide, at a level exceeding the legal limit, and the name of sulphite was 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: Chao Zhou Preserved Mustard
Brand: You Hua
Manufacturer: (Not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 225 grams per pack
Best-before date: March 28, 2020

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a shop in North Point for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 451 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 100 ppm. The name of sulphite was also 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 importer concerned, Kai Bo Food Supermarket, has initiated a recall. Members of the public may call the importer's hotline at 3987 8041 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 commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables, dried fruits, pickled vegetables and salted fish products. This preservative is of low toxicity. As it is water soluble, 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.