

Sample of candied lotus seed detected with excessive preservative

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 21) that a sample of loose-packed candied lotus seed was found to contain a preservative, sulphur dioxide, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the abovementioned sample of candied lotus seed from a retail outlet in Sheung Wan for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 1 190 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 500 ppm."

The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected product. The CFS is tracing the source of the affected product.

Sulphur dioxide is a commonly used preservative in a variety of foods including dried vegetables and dried fruits. 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). Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment upon conviction.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.