

Sample of imported frozen sole detected with methylmercury exceeding legal limit

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (June 13) announced that a sample of frozen sole imported from France was detected with methylmercury, a metallic contaminant, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the incident. 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 Sole
Place of origin: France
Manufacture Date: February 7, 2024
Best-before: February 7, 2027
Importer: The House of Fine Foods Limited

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample at the import level for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained methylmercury at a level of 0.8 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 0.5 ppm," a spokesman for the CFS said.

The spokesman said that the CFS had informed the importer concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected product. The CFS is also tracing the source and distribution of the product concerned.

"Methylmercury is the major form of mercury in fish. At high levels, mercury can affect foetal brain development, and affect vision, hearing, muscle co-ordination and memory in adults. Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS's Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, alfonso, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning a pregnancy and young children should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and avoid consumption of the above-mentioned types of fish to minimise excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," the spokesman added.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap. 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination above the legal limit is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The CFS will alert the French authorities and the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. An investigation is ongoing.