

Sample of prepackaged frozen bigeye fish detected with Ponceau 4R and not in compliance with food label rules

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (April 26) that a sample of prepackaged frozen bigeye fish imported from Vietnam was found to contain Ponceau 4R, a non-permitted colouring matter in fish in a raw and unprocessed state. It was also inconsistent with the relevant claim on its food label. The CFS is following up on the case.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Frozen Sea Caught Big Eye Fish
Place of origin: Vietnam
Distributor: Best Way Food International Trading Limited
Net content: two pieces
Best before: June 30, 2022

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a supermarket in Lai Chi Kok for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that it contained Ponceau 4R, which was inconsistent with the 'no artificial colourant is added' claim on its food label.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the above-mentioned irregularities 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 the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call the distributor's hotline at 3568 9170 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence," the spokesman said.

"Under the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations (Cap. 132H), Ponceau 4R is a permitted colouring matter in certain food but not in fish in a raw and unprocessed state. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment," the spokesman added.

Furthermore, as stipulated in Section 61 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), if any person falsely describes a food or misleads as to the nature, substance or quality of the food on a label of the food sold by him, he shall be guilty of an offence and be 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 case and take appropriate action. An investigation is ongoing.