

Several prepackaged food samples in breach of food labelling regulation

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (November 16) that a sample of prepackaged dates, a sample of prepackaged preserved cabbage and a sample of prepackaged bamboo fungi were found to contain sulphur dioxide, a preservative which is allowed to be used in certain foods, but the functional class and name of the additive were not declared on the food labels. Members of the public should not consume the affected batches of products. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batches of products immediately if they possess them.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Chinese Date
Brand: Green dot dot
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 350 grams
Distributor: Organic Gardens International Limited (recall hotline: 3181 4488)
Best-before date: July 23, 2022

Product name: Tianjin Preserved Vegetable
Brand: (not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 300 grams
Distributor: Golden Long Food Trading Limited (recall hotline: 2566 3007)
Best-before date: December 31, 2022

Product name: (not available in English)
Brand: Kai's Gourmet
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 38 grams
Importer: Kairun Food HK Ltd. (recall hotline: 3483 0098)
Best-before date: July 30, 2022

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned dates, preserved cabbage and bamboo fungi samples from a department store in Hung Hom, a supermarket in Mong Kok and an online shop 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 name of the additive were not declared on the food labels of the samples," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities, and instructed them to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batches of products. The above-mentioned distributors/ importer have initiated a recall

according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call the respective hotlines above during office hours for enquiries about the recall," 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 ppm 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.