

Prepackaged red date and date samples detected with sulphur dioxide

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (December 7) announced that a sample of prepackaged red dates was detected with sulphur dioxide, a preservative, at a level exceeding the legal limit, and the functional class and name of the additive were also not declared on the food label. In addition, the CFS found that a sample of prepackaged dates contained sulphur dioxide, but the functional class and name of the additive were not declared on the food label. Members of the public should not consume the affected batches of the products. The trade should also stop using or selling the affected batches of the products immediately if they possess any of them.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: SSJ Sliced Red Date
Brand: SHAN SHAU JOK
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 500 grams
Best-before date: September 30, 2024
Distributor: Yue Sang Trading Limited
Hotline: 2392 6288

Product name: Dates
Brand: (Not available in English)
Place of origin: China
Net weight: 605 grams
Best-before date: October 31, 2024
Packer: Cross International Limited
Hotline: 2815 5872

"The CFS collected the above-mentioned red date and date samples from an online vendor and a retail outlet in Yuen Long respectively for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test results showed that the red date sample contained sulphur dioxide at a level of 1 400 parts per million, exceeding the legal limit of 1 000 ppm under the Preservatives in Food Regulation (Cap. 132BD), and the functional class and name of the additive were also not declared on the food label. As for the other date sample, although the level of sulphur dioxide found to be contained in it is below the statutory maximum permitted level, the functional class and the name of the additive were not declared on the food label of the sample," a spokesman for the CFS said.

The CFS has informed the vendors and the distributor/packer concerned of the irregularities and instructed them to stop sales and remove from shelves the affected batches of the products. The distributor/packer concerned have initiated recalls according to the CFS's instructions. Members of the public may call the respective hotlines during office hours for enquiries about the

recalls.

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.

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, headaches and nausea after consumption.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action. Investigations are ongoing.

[Non-local student jailed for making false representation and using false instrument](#)

A female student from the Mainland was charged at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts with two counts of making false representation to an Immigration Department (ImmD) staff member and two counts of using a false instrument, and was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment today (December 7).

The 34-year-old defendant was granted student entry permit to study in a master degree course in Hong Kong in June this year and applied to the ImmD for dependent entry permits for her husband and daughter in July. For such applications, the defendant submitted a water bill and an electricity bill as her residential proof in Hong Kong. In the course of assessment, as the authenticity of the abovementioned documents was in question, ImmD staff verified with the relevant public utilities and confirmed that the utility bills submitted were false. During the interview with the defendant by ImmD staff, she insisted she was residing at the address shown on the utility bills. An investigation against the defendant thus began.

In the course of the investigation, the defendant admitted under caution that she was in fact not residing in Hong Kong. However, in order to have the entry dependant permit applications of her family members approved, she

submitted the false utility bills to the ImmD and made false representation to the ImmD by falsely claiming she was residing at the address shown on the utility bills.

The defendant was charged of making false representation to ImmD staff and using false instruments. The defendant pleaded guilty to all charges and was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment by the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts today.

"Under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an Immigration officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years. Moreover, any person who makes, uses or has in his custody a false instrument commits an offence and is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to imprisonment for 14 years," an ImmD spokesman said.

[Enhancements to Code of Banking Practice](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) welcomes the launch of the revised Code of Banking Practice (the Code) by the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) and the DTC Association (DTCA) today (December 7). The Code is jointly issued by the HKAB and the DTCA with endorsement by the HKMA.

In recent years, the Hong Kong banking industry has been actively enhancing the quality of products and services in multiple aspects, including more extensive adoption of technology and introduction of innovative modes of services, with a view to enhancing customer experience and at the same time striving to further promote good banking practices. With the sustained development of banking services and the convenience brought about by new products and services, customers also expect more flexibility in controlling and managing their banking matters with a view to fulfilling their needs under different situations as well as receiving enhanced consumer protection at the same time.

The Code of Banking Practice Committee, comprising representatives of the HKAB, the DTCA and the HKMA, has further reviewed the Code and formulated further enhancement measures following the revision of the Code in 2021. The latest enhancements, apart from ensuring corresponding protection of customers in digital banking services, also empower customers to have more control over their financial matters and ensure proper safeguards to customers under innovative service arrangement. Major enhancements to the

Code will:

- further enhance consumer protection in digital banking services, including that banks should effectively enable customers to obtain the relevant important information when applying for banking services and conducting transactions on Internet banking platforms; banks should also provide security advice to customers in respect of new technologies adopted in banking services, and enhance the customers' understanding of the relevant risks and protection measures of digital banking services; and bank should properly retain records of marketing and promotional materials used in digital channels so as to facilitate the handling of potential customer enquiries or disputes subsequently;
- further empower customers on financial management, for example, customers will receive enriched information on the risk and potential repayment obligations of loan products from the revised Key Facts Statements, and can use the loan calculators on the Internet banking platforms to assess the cost of borrowing and their own repayment ability before making borrowing decisions. Banks should also increase the credit limit of credit cards only after obtaining the agreement of customers. In addition, banks should inform customers at least 60 days before making any significant changes to the terms and conditions of loan products so as to allow customers more time to take appropriate preparatory actions; and also timely advise customers with potential financial difficulties of possible options to avoid further worsening of their financial situation.
- ensure fair treatment of customers, which include increased transparency of opening, maintenance and closure of bank accounts and provision of channels for customers to request banks to review the relevant decisions to ensure reasonable access to basic banking services; provision of more comprehensive protection and support by banks to customers having disputes on products and services; and provision of proper protection to customers during banks' loan recovery process; and
- introduce the recent updates of the G20/OECD High-Level Principles on Financial Consumer Protection (Note) to the general principles for banks to observe when providing products and services to customers, thereby continuing the promotion of international good banking practice in Hong Kong and the provision of high-quality and accessible financial products and services.

The Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "Banking services have always been an integral part of the daily life of the members of the public. In order for the banking industry to have healthy and sustained development, there must be corresponding consumer protection as the foundation so as to strengthen the public confidence in banking services. I am very pleased that the HKAB and the DTCA have further enhanced the Code of Banking Practice. Under this, apart from better protection to consumers using digital banking services, customers are also further empowered to manage their banking matters and thus enabling them to make better use of banking products and services according to their own circumstances. It also ensures

fair treatment of customers by banks and comprehensive protection of consumer interests."

The revised Code is effective from today (December 7, 2023). Authorized Institutions are expected to achieve full compliance with the new provisions as quickly as possible within 6 months of the effective date, with an extension of up to 12 months for provisions requiring more extensive system enhancements. For provisions involving complex system changes, the implementation is extended for up to 18 months. The revised Code can be downloaded [here](#).

Note: The HKMA participated in the international discussion of the High-Level Principles on Financial Consumer Protection (the Principles) issued by the Group of Twenty (G20) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and provided recommendations for the updates. The updated Principles were endorsed by the G20 leaders in 2022. The original Principles covered 10 principles on important consumer protection areas (e.g. "Disclosure and Transparency", "Responsible Business Conduct" and "Financial Education and Awareness"). The updated 12 Principles incorporated two new principles on "Quality Financial Products" and "Access and Inclusion", and introduced new cross-cutting themes, namely "Financial Well-being" of financial consumers and the impact, opportunities and risks of "Digitalisation and Technological Advancements", "Sustainable Finance".

[Employment agency's application for licence renewal refused](#)

A spokesman for the Labour Department (LD) today (December 7) reminded licensees and operators of employment agencies (EAs) to conduct their business in compliance with the law at all times.

The LD refused to renew the licence of Laikee Tang Advisers, located in Sai Ying Pun, as the sole director operating this EA had been convicted under the Theft Ordinance.

Under section 53(1)(d)(i) of the Employment Ordinance (EO), the Commissioner for Labour may refuse to issue or renew an EA licence if the related person of the licensee has, within the preceding five years, been convicted of an offence involving membership of a triad society, fraud, dishonesty or extortion.

"Licensees and operators of EAs are reminded to conduct their business in compliance with the law, including the EO, the Employment Agency Regulations, as well as the Code of Practice for EAs at all times. Otherwise their licences may be revoked or their applications for licence renewal may

be refused," the spokesman said.

This was the fourth revocation or refusal of renewal of an EA licence made by the LD in 2023.

Should there be enquiries about matters related to EAs or complaints about malpractices of EAs, please contact the Employment Agencies Administration of the LD by calling 2115 3667, sending e-mails to ea-ee@labour.gov.hk, or visiting its office at Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon.

Appeal for information on missing woman in Sham Shui Po (with photo)

Police today (December 7) appealed to the public for information on a woman who went missing in Sham Shui Po.

Chik Fung-kiu, aged 73, went missing after she left an elderly home on Pei Ho Street last night (December 6). The staff of the elderly home made a report to Police on the same day.

She is about 1.55 metres tall, 45 kilograms in weight and of thin build. She has a long face with yellow complexion and short white hair. She was last seen wearing a black windbreaker, a light blue polo shirt, black sports trousers and light coloured sandals.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing woman or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Persons Unit of Kowloon West on 3661 8036 or 9020 6542 or email to rmpu-kw@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.

