

Trade instructed to suspend importing and selling of ready-to-eat raw oysters harvested in Coffin Bay in Australia

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 23) instructed the trade to suspend the import of ready-to-eat raw oysters harvested in Coffin Bay in Australia. The trade should also stop using or selling the products concerned immediately should they possess them.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS noticed that Food Standards Australia New Zealand reported that ready-to-eat raw Pacific oysters harvested in Coffin Bay in Australia, which were suspected to be contaminated with *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, were under recall. Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately conducted investigation and contacted local major importers for follow-up. According to the Department of Primary Industries and Regions of the Government of South Australia, the Coffin Bay growing area includes four harvesting areas, namely the Port Douglas harvesting area, the Mt Dutton Bay harvesting area, the Kellidie Bay West harvesting area and the Kellidie Bay East harvesting area. The CFS has immediately instructed the trade to suspend the import into and sale within Hong Kong of all ready-to-eat raw oysters from the Coffin Bay growing area.

Based on the information provided by the International Food Safety Authorities Network, the CFS's preliminary investigation found that two importers – Worldwide Seafood Limited (hotline: 2911 4989) and Diligence Marine Products Limited (hotline: 6732 0690) – had imported the affected products to Hong Kong. The CFS has instructed the importers concerned to stop sale of, remove from shelves and recall the affected products, and is tracing the distribution of the products concerned. Enquiries about the recall can be made to the importers' above-mentioned hotlines during office hours. The trade should also stop using or selling the products concerned immediately should they possess them.

The spokesman pointed out that as oysters feed by filtering a large volume of seawater, pathogens (such as *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*) can accumulate in them if they are grown in or harvested from contaminated water. Raw or partially cooked oysters are high-risk foods. Susceptible groups, such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems or liver diseases, should avoid eating them.

The CFS will inform the Australian authorities and will also notify the local trade. It will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health. Investigation is ongoing.