

CFS announces food safety report for December 2020 and summary of food surveillance programme for 2020

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (January 29) released the findings of its food safety report for last month (December 2020). The results of about 16,000 food samples tested were found to be satisfactory except for seven unsatisfactory samples which were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 2,100 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 3,700 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 10,200 (including about 10,000 taken from food imported from Japan) were collected to test radiation levels.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygienic indicators, while the chemical tests included pesticides, preservatives, metallic contaminants, colouring matters, veterinary drug residues and others.

The samples comprised about 3,100 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; 800 samples of cereals, grains and their products; 800 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 1,900 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 1,700 samples of aquatic and related products; and 7,700 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The seven unsatisfactory samples comprised a rice roll sample and a preserved date sample found to contain excessive preservative, a sweet potato sample detected with cadmium exceeding the legal limit, a watercress sample detected with pesticide residue exceeding the legal limit, a frozen suckling pig sample detected with excessive enrofloxacin, a honey sample found to contain excessive sucrose content, and a dried mango sample detected with lead exceeding the legal limit.

The CFS has taken follow-up actions on the unsatisfactory samples including informing the vendors concerned of the test results, instructing them to stop selling the affected food items and tracing the sources of the food items in question.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food is fit for human consumption and meets legal requirements. Consumers should patronise reliable shops when buying food and maintain a balanced diet to minimise food risks.

Summary of food surveillance programme for 2020

Concluding the food surveillance programme for 2020, the spokesman said that apart from routine food surveillance, the CFS conducted a number of targeted as well as seasonal and popular food surveillance projects.

"In addition to about 102,000 samples of imported Japanese food taken for testing of radiation levels in response to the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in Japan, about 66,600 samples were tested by the CFS last year. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent, which was comparable to the results in recent years. This indicates that food safety has been maintained at a high standard in Hong Kong," he said.

"The exceedances or breaches for most of the unsatisfactory samples were not serious and would not pose adverse health effects to the general public. For individual food items with unsatisfactory test results, the CFS has taken prompt and effective risk management action to safeguard public health," he said.

He added that in planning the food surveillance programme, the CFS will always take into consideration a number of factors such as the food consumption level and the risk of the food concerned in deciding on the number of samples to be tested and the frequency of sampling as well as the testing parameters. In addition, the CFS will also adjust its food surveillance programmes and strengthen relevant testing with regard to local and overseas food incidents as well as past surveillance data, in particular breaches of regulatory requirements that occurred more frequently, so as to safeguard food safety in Hong Kong.