

CFS announces food safety report for November

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (December 31) released the findings of its food safety report for the last month. The results of about 12 800 food samples tested were satisfactory except for six samples that were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 300 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 4 100 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 7 400 (including about 7 200 taken from food imported from Japan) were collected to test radiation levels.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygiene 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; 900 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 800 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 1 800 samples of aquatic and related products; and 5 400 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The six unsatisfactory samples comprised two vegetable and fruit samples detected to have excessive pesticide residues; a snowflake brick sample detected to contain coliform bacteria exceeding the legal limit; a preserved mustard sample found to contain excessive preservative; a grass carp sample found to contain a trace amount of malachite green; and a preserved mustard sample found to contain undeclared sulphite.

The CFS has taken follow-up action 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.

Since the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap 132CM) came into effect on August 1, 2014, as of November 30 this year, the CFS has taken over 191 800 food samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for testing for pesticide residues. The overall unsatisfactory rate is less than 0.2 per cent.

The spokesman added that excessive pesticide residues in food may arise from the trade not observing Good Agricultural Practice, e.g. using excessive pesticides and/or not allowing sufficient time for pesticides to decompose before harvesting. The maximum residue limit (MRL) of pesticide residues in food is not a safety indicator. It is the maximum concentration of pesticide

residues to be permitted in a food commodity under Good Agricultural Practice when applying pesticides. In this connection, consumption of food with pesticide residues higher than the MRL will not necessarily lead to any adverse health effects.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food for sale 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.