

CFS urges public not to consume a batch of bottled salted egg paste suspected to contain excessive Staphylococcus aureus

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (February 21) said that a notification was received from the Food Safety Centre, Macau that a batch of bottled salted egg paste imported from Hong Kong was found to contain excessive *Staphylococcus aureus*, a pathogen. The CFS is following up on the incident.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: Salted Egg Paste
Brand: English name not available
Place of origin: China
Distributor: Un Chi Enterprise Development Company
Net weight: 180 g per bottle
Best-before date: October 25, 2019

A spokesman for the CFS said, "A notification was received from the Food Safety Centre, Macau, that a sample collected from the abovementioned salted egg paste imported from Hong Kong was detected with *Staphylococcus aureus* at a level of 150 000 organisms per gram, exceeding the standard of Macau. Under Hong Kong's Microbiological Guidelines for Food, if ready-to-eat food contains *Staphylococcus aureus* and other coagulase-positive staphylococci at a level of more than 10 000 organisms per gram, it is also considered unsatisfactory. The CFS therefore immediately contacted the local distributor concerned for follow-up. According to the information provided by the distributor, the affected batch of product was available for sale in Hong Kong and had been sold out."

The distributor concerned has initiated a recall according to CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call the distributor's hotline at 2650 3802 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the distribution of the product concerned.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food for sale in Hong Kong, locally produced or imported, should be fit for human consumption. An offender is subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

"*Staphylococcus aureus* can produce enterotoxins that cause food poisoning. Common symptoms include nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain, often accompanied by diarrhoea. The CFS advises the public not to consume the affected batch of product if they have bought it. The trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately should they possess it,"

he added.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.