

Soybean milk sample found to contain excessive Bacillus cereus

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 26) announced that a soybean milk sample was detected to contain an excessive amount of a pathogen, *Bacillus cereus*. The CFS is following up on the case.

A CFS spokesman said, "Following up on a food complaint, the CFS collected the above-mentioned sample from a food premises in Yau Ma Tei for testing. The test result showed that the sample contained *Bacillus cereus* at a level of 500 000 per gram. According to the Microbiological Guidelines for Food, if ready-to-eat food contains *Bacillus cereus* at a level of more than 100 000 per gram, it is considered unsatisfactory."

The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the unsatisfactory test result and instructed it to stop selling the food item concerned immediately. The CFS has also inspected the food premises concerned, provided health education on food safety and hygiene to the person-in-charge and staff, and requested it to review and improve the food production process and carry out thorough cleaning and disinfection.

According to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), all food available 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.

Bacillus cereus is commonly found in the environment. Unhygienic conditions in food processing and storage may give rise to its growth. Consuming food contaminated with excessive *Bacillus cereus* or its heat-stable toxins may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting and diarrhoea.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action in order to safeguard public health and food safety.