

Two frozen silver cod samples imported from US detected with mercury exceeding legal limit

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 15) that a prepackaged frozen silver cod sample and a loose-pack frozen silver cod sample imported from the United States (US) were found to contain a metal contaminant, mercury, at levels exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the cases.

Details of the prepackaged frozen silver cod are as follows:

Product name: (not available in English)

Place of origin: US

Packer: Cheung Kee Sea Products (Hong Kong) Ltd.

Best-before-date: March 30, 2021

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned samples from vendors in Shek Tong Tsui and Tuen Mun respectively for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the prepackaged silver cod sample contained mercury at a level of 1.03 parts per million (ppm), while the loose-pack silver cod sample contained mercury at a level of 0.64 ppm, both exceeding the legal limit of 0.5 ppm."

The spokesman said the CFS had informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities and the vendors have already stopped sale of the affected products according to CFS' instructions. The Centre is tracing the source of the products concerned.

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Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS' Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, albacore, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children, should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and avoid consumption of the above-mentioned types of fish which may contain high mercury levels to minimise the health risk posed to the foetus, infants and young children by excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," he added.

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~~~~~ According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination

above the legal limit may be prosecuted and is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

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ã€€ "People are advised to maintain a balanced and varied diet. To avoid health risks posed by excessive intake of metallic contaminants, pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children should avoid eating large or predatory fish," the spokesman said.

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The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the cases and take appropriate action. Investigations are ongoing.