

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene**

**Summary of Recent Food Incidents and Surveillance**

**1. Targeted food surveillance on sulphur dioxide in meat**

- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) conducted a targeted food surveillance project earlier this year to assess the use of sulphur dioxide in meat. The result was announced in November. Under the law, preservatives, including sulphur dioxide, should not be added to fresh or frozen meat.
- A total of 321 meat samples (190 pork, 118 beef and 13 mutton) were collected for testing of sulphur dioxide. The overall satisfactory rate was 95.3%. Fifteen samples (including 11 beef, 3 pork and 1 mutton) were found to contain sulphur dioxide at levels between 23 and 3300 ppm. These levels of sulphur dioxide should not pose adverse health effects on consumers upon normal consumption. As sulphur dioxide is water soluble, most of it can also be removed through washing and cooking.
- The CFS had taken follow-up actions, including collecting follow-up samples and issuing warning letters. The CFS will continue to remind the trade through various means such as the Trade Consultation Forum.

**2. Targeted surveillance on preservatives in preserved fruits and vegetables**

- The CFS conducted a targeted food surveillance project to assess the use of preservatives in preserved fruits and vegetables. Some 460 samples of pickled vegetables and dried fruits were collected for testings. The result was announced in September.
- The overall satisfactory rate was 91.4%. Twenty-five samples of preserved vegetables were found to contain sulphur dioxide (200 - 710 ppm) and/or benzoic acid (320 - 1,600 ppm). Fifteen samples of preserved fruits were found to contain sulphur dioxide (560 - 4,200 ppm),

benzoic acid (760 ppm), or sorbic acid (160 - 2,300 ppm). Although the preservatives detected had exceeded the legal limits, they are of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers upon normal consumption.

- The CFS had taken follow-up actions, including asking concerned vendors to stop selling the food concerned, issuing warning letters and taking follow-up samples. Surveillance results were announced to the public. The CFS has reminded the trade through letters and other channels such as the website and the Trade Consultation Forum.

### **3. Seasonal food surveillance on hairy crabs**

- The CFS conducted from September to October a seasonal food surveillance project on hairy crabs for chemical and microbiological analysis. A total of 178 samples were collected from import, wholesale and retail levels. Chemical analysis included veterinary drug residues, metallic contamination and synthetic hormones. Microbiological analysis covered testing for parasites. All test results were satisfactory.
- A press release on the surveillance results was issued and relevant advice on food safety was provided.

### **4. A report of hospital admission suspected to be related to a bottled tea**

- The CFS in collaboration with the Police and the Centre for Health Protection carried out the investigation on a report in October involving a nine-year-old boy who was admitted to hospital for observation after consuming a bottled tea bought from a supermarket. Laboratory tests on the tea remnant showed the presence of chloroxylenol (an ingredient of antiseptic).
- The CFS collected 15 samples of different products of the same brand, including the product concerned, from the supplier's factory and warehouse, and various retail outlets for testings. No chloroxylenol was found in any of these samples.
- So far, there were no other similar reports associated with the bottled tea. The cause of the presence of chloroxylenol in the remnant has not been concluded.

## **5. Possible contamination of *Listeria monocytogenes* in frozen mussel meat from New Zealand**

- The CFS was informed by the New Zealand authority in November of a product recall as a result of detection of the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes* in samples of frozen mussel meat processed by a premises in New Zealand. Some of the suspected contaminated frozen mussel meat products were exported to Hong Kong.
- As precautionary measures, the CFS contacted local importers and informed the trade of the incident, urging them to stop selling the products. A press release on the incident was issued. So far, no local case of listeriosis was reported to be associated with the consumption of the mussels.

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