

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

Summary of Recent Food Incidents and Surveillance

Survey on popular food items: Street snacks

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) conducted a survey on various street snacks such as fish ball, pork skin, chicken wing, grilled dried squid, fresh fruit juice, stir-fried noodle and fish siu mai. A total of 345 samples of street snacks were collected from some 200 retail shops for chemical and microbiological tests. The survey results were announced at a press conference held on 24 July 2008.

2. Except two curry squid and one fried pig intestine samples, which were found to contain non-permitted colouring matter Orange II, all the other samples were tested satisfactory. The Orange II detected in the three food samples was unlikely to pose any immediate health risk for normal consumption. Follow-up action taken by the CFS includes issuing warning letter and taking follow-up samples.

Possible contamination of certain peppers with *Salmonella*

3. In June 2008, the United States (US) Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) warned the public not to eat certain red plum, red Roma and round red varieties of raw tomatoes, and products containing these raw tomatoes in the US. It was because they were suspected to be associated with some disease outbreaks caused by the bacteria *Salmonella*.

4. In July, besides raw tomatoes, the US authorities further suspected that consumption of certain raw peppers might also be associated with the *Salmonella* outbreaks. The concerned food included jalapeno peppers, serrano peppers, and products containing them.

5. After a lengthy investigation, the US FDA removed its warning against eating raw tomatoes in mid-July. On the other hand, US FDA warned consumers to avoid raw serrano peppers and raw jalapeno peppers grown, harvested or packed in Mexico and any foods containing them.

6. The CFS alerted local trade of the incident and contacted the US and Mexico authorities for more information. The CFS took samples of US tomatoes for analysis and the test results were satisfactory. Sales check revealed that the concerned peppers were not available in major local retailers. The CFS also issued a press release to advise against the consumption of the concerned peppers and appeal to the trade to stop selling them.

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