

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene**

**Summary of Recent Food Incidents**

**Food surveillance on popular food items: Children's snacks**

From September to November 2008, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) conducted food surveillance on popular children's snacks. A total of 399 samples of various popular children's snacks including sweets, savouries, baking products, beverages and frozen confections were collected from about 170 retail outlets and food plants for chemical and microbiological tests. All the samples were found to be satisfactory.

2. A press release on the surveillance results was issued and relevant advice on food safety was provided to the public.

**Seasonal food surveillance on Lunar New Year food**

3. From December 2008 to January 2009, the CFS conducted seasonal food surveillance on Lunar New Year food. Samples included festive puddings, sweetened fruits and vegetables, fried snacks, melon seeds, glutinous rice balls, preserved meat, dried seafood and "poon choi". Of the 633 samples taken for chemical and microbiological tests, 627 were found to be satisfactory.

4. All the samples passed the microbiological tests. For the chemical tests, two samples of sweetened winter-melon, a bamboo fungus sample and a "jin zhen" (金針) sample were found to contain the preservative sulphur dioxide at levels ranging from 2 800ppm to 4 900ppm, exceeding the permitted level of 2 000ppm. A sample of Chinese pork sausage and a sample of red melon seed were found to contain the non-permitted colouring matter "Red 2G".

5. At the levels of sulphur dioxide detected, the concerned sweetened winter-melon, bamboo fungus and "jin zhen" should not pose adverse health effects with normal consumption. The immediate health risk for consuming food containing "Red 2G" was low. However, the risk of causing cancer might not be ruled out for long-term consumption.

6. Regarding the unsatisfactory food samples, the CFS issued warning letters to the shops concerned and conducted source tracing. The CFS also requested the relevant traders to stop selling the concerned products. The surveillance results were announced to the public.

### **Food incident on peanut granola bars with possible *Salmonella* contamination**

7. In January, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the United States (US) reported an ongoing multistate outbreak of human infections due to *Salmonella* Typhimurium. Some cases were related to peanut-containing products produced by the Peanut Corporation of America. Some food manufacturers in the US had recalled their products as the affected peanut-containing products were used in the manufacturing process.

8. The CFS had been in close contact with the US authorities since the start of the incident. The US Authorities undertook to inform CFS should they find that any affected products had been exported to Hong Kong. Though no such alert was received initially, the CFS kept the trade informed of latest developments of the US recall process.

9. On January 29, the CFS was informed that certain batches of granola bars suspected of contamination by *Salmonella* were found to have been exported to Hong Kong. The CFS traced and alerted the relevant traders to stop selling the affected products and issued press release to appeal to the public not to consume them.

10. The CFS collected 30 samples of peanut butter and its related products for testing of *Salmonella* and all results were satisfactory. The CFS would continue to closely monitor the situation.

## **Food incident on infant formula with possible *Enterobacter sakazakii* contamination**

11. The European Union authorities informed the CFS in mid-February that the French manufacturer of an infant formula product was recalling a certain batch of the product, as the South Korean authorities had found *Enterobacter sakazakii* in the concerned batch. Information revealed that the affected product had been imported into Hong Kong, though only less than 10 cans were sold to consumers.

12. The CFS alerted the trade to stop selling the affected batch and closely monitored the situation. A press release was issued to advise the public not to consume the concerned batch of infant formula.

**Centre for Food Safety  
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Food and Health Bureau  
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