

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

Summary of Recent Food Surveillance

Targeted food surveillance on microbiological quality of ice-cream

From May to June 2009, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) conducted a targeted food surveillance project to assess the microbiological quality of ice-cream. A total of 1000 ice-cream samples, including soft ice-cream, sundaes, ice-cream in wrapper, ice-cream scoops and popsicles were collected from food factories, ice-cream vans, convenience stores, supermarkets and restaurants for microbiological tests.

2. All the samples were tested negative for pathogens, including *Salmonella* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. However, 11 samples were found to have total bacterial count ranging from 66,000 to 630,000 per gramme and coliform organisms ranging from 160 to 780 per gramme, which exceeded the legal limits. The levels of total bacteria count and coliform organisms detected in the samples were believed to be a result of sub-optimal hygienic conditions during processing.

3. The CFS took follow-up actions, including issuing warning letters to the retailers concerned and collecting samples for testing. Two press releases on the surveillance results were issued in June and July 2009.

Targeted food surveillance on Sudan dyes in eggs and egg products

4. From March to April 2009, the CFS collected about 200 samples of eggs, including fried eggs, tea leaf chicken eggs and "lo shui" eggs, and egg products including western cakes, egg tarts, egg rolls, egg noodles, salad dressings and mayonnaises, snacks, steamed egg custard buns and rice dumplings with duck egg yolk filling, for testing of Sudan dyes. All the results were satisfactory. A press release on the surveillance results was issued and relevant advice on food safety was provided to the trade and public in June 2009.

Survey on popular food items — Hong Kong-style desserts

5. From April to May 2009, the CFS collected a total of 300 samples of Hong Kong-style desserts such as sweet soups, cakes and puddings, from restaurants, retail outlets and food factories for chemical and microbiological tests. All the microbiological test results were satisfactory.

6. For chemical tests, four samples including one mung bean sweet soup with root starch jelly, one bean curd sheet sweet soup with root starch jelly and its follow-up sample, and one follow-up sample of root starch jelly collected at the concerned supplier were found to contain non-permitted preservative, namely boric acid, at levels ranging from 830 ppm to 11,000 ppm. Based on the levels of boric acid detected in the unsatisfactory samples, normal consumption should not pose any adverse health effect on consumers.

7. These unsatisfactory samples were collected from two food premises and a grocery. The CFS took follow-up actions, including issuing warning letters to the operators concerned. A press release on the surveillance results was issued in June 2009.

Targeted food surveillance on the microbiological quality of lunch boxes and prepackaged food that requires reheating before consumption

8. From April to May 2009, the CFS collected about 300 samples of lunch boxes from food factories for microbiological tests. For prepackaged food that requires reheating before consumption, around 200 samples, including meal boxes (such as rice and spaghetti dishes), snacks (such as chicken wings/ legs and sausages), dim sum and pizzas, were taken from convenience stores and supermarkets for microbiological tests. All the results were satisfactory. A press release on the surveillance results was issued and relevant advice on food safety was provided to the trade and public in June 2009.

**Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Food and Health Bureau
August 2009**