

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

Summary of Recent Food Surveillance

Targeted surveillance on sulphur dioxide in meat

In the summer months, the CFS conducted a targeted food surveillance project to assess the use of sulphur dioxide in fresh meat. Though commonly added to foods like dried fruits and fruit juices, sulphur dioxide is not permitted to be added to fresh, chilled or frozen meat. The project had been conducted after repeated detection of the use of the non-permitted chemical in fresh meat in recent years. Samples include pork, beef and mutton collected from various meat stalls. Of the 222 samples tested, the overall satisfactory rate was 95%, with 11 unsatisfactory results. Some involved repeat offenders.

2. The unsatisfactory samples included nine fresh beef and two fresh pork samples with sulphur dioxide levels ranging from 20ppm and 390ppm. As sulphur dioxide is water soluble and of low toxicity, it does not pose serious health effects to the public.

3. The CFS has taken follow-up action including issuing warning letters to the retailers concerned and taking further samples for testing. When there was sufficient evidence, prosecution has also been taken out. Press release on the surveillance results was issued in October 2009.

Seasonal food surveillance on mooncakes

4. In August and September, the CFS collected samples for a seasonal food surveillance project on food safety of mooncakes.

5. A total of 250 samples, including traditional, snowy, ice-cream and other mooncakes, had been collected from retail outlets and food factories for microbiological and chemical tests. The chemical tests included preservatives, antioxidants and colouring matters such as sudan dyes. The

microbiological tests covered total bacterial count, coliform organisms and pathogens such as Salmonella, Staphylococcus aureus and Listeria monocytogenes.

6. All samples of the project showed satisfactory results. A press release on the surveillance results was issued. Relevant advice on food safety was also provided to the trade and public in September 2009.

Seasonal food surveillance on hairy crabs

7. The CFS had also completed a seasonal food surveillance project on food safety on hairy crabs recently.

8. A total of 106 samples were collected at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological and chemical tests. The chemical tests included veterinary drug residues (including chloramphenicol, sulphonamides, tetracycline, nitrofurans and malachite green), metallic contamination (including mercury, lead and arsenic), synthetic hormones, and colouring matters (including Sudan dyes), while the microbiological tests covered parasites.

9. All results of the samples were satisfactory. A press release was issued in November 2009 with advice to the trade and consumers.

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