

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Special Survey on Mainland Food

Background

In response to the recent food incidents in the Mainland, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) conducted a special survey on food items imported from the Mainland in May 2004.

2. A total of 133 Mainland food items were collected from retail outlets for chemical testing for food additives and contaminants. These food items included canned food, preserved food, instant food, snacks, beverages, sauces and condiments.

Result

3. Analysis of the laboratory results indicated that seven food items contain chemicals exceeding the legal limits stipulated in the food law of Hong Kong. The result is summarized as follows –

Food Item	Chemical Found	Amount	Legal limit
Sauce	Benzoic acid	530 ppm ¹	250 ppm
Sauce	Benzoic acid	590 ppm	250 ppm
Soy Sauce	Benzoic acid	750 ppm	550 ppm
Preserved food	Benzoic acid	1,700 ppm	250ppm
Preserved food	Chromium	1.9 ppm	1 ppm
Instant food	Sorbic acid	660 ppm	Not permitted
Peanut	Aflatoxin	1,400 ppb ²	20 ppb

4. Except for the aflatoxins, all the levels of chemicals detected in the food samples are unlikely to cause any adverse health effects.

Follow-up Action

5. FEHD is following up the sources of the food concerned and will consider taking prosecution actions against the relevant parties. Meanwhile,

¹ Parts per million

² Parts per billion

the retailers have been asked to cease the sale of the products concerned. FEHD has also informed the relevant Mainland authorities of the findings and would keep vigilant on the surveillance of similar products.

Way Forward

6. FEHD will keep up the efforts in food safety control and continue to maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities. Information on food incidents and food safety will be disseminated through FEHD's website, press conferences and distribution of pamphlets to enhance public awareness. On the other hand, food traders are urged to ensure that all food for sale must comply with the relevant regulations in Hong Kong and should be fit for human consumption. Vendors are reminded to obtain their food from reliable suppliers.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
July 2004