

Food Safety Report for November 2009

Centre for Food Safety
**Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department**



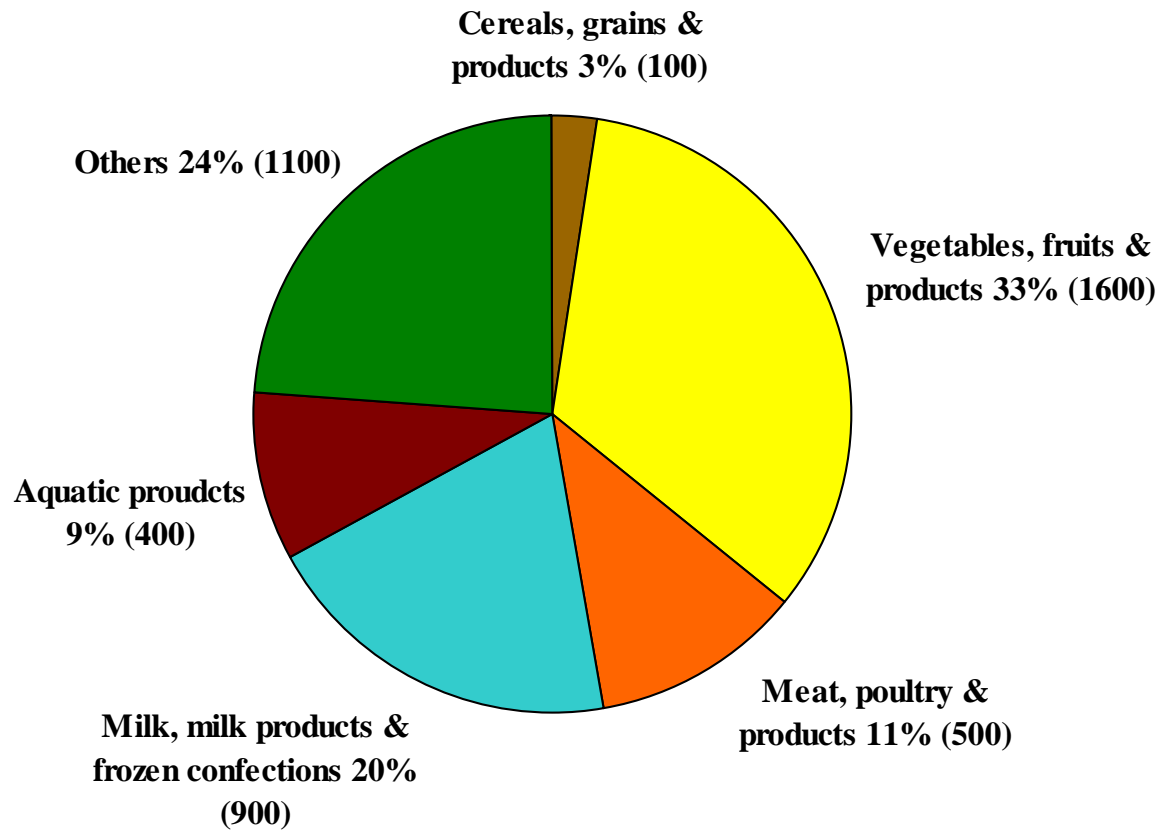
December 2009

Introduction

- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e., routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.
- CFS releases the “Food Safety Report” every month so as to allow the public to obtain the latest food safety information more timely. Besides, CFS has released the results of the following Seasonal and Targeted Food Surveillance projects as well as the Survey on Popular Food Items:
 - “Microbiological Quality in Poon Choi”
 - “Formaldehyde in Noodlefish”
 - “Enterobacter Sakazakii in Powdered Infant Formula”
 - “Traditional Local Snacks”
- This presentation gives an account of the food surveillance sample analyses that were completed in November 2009.

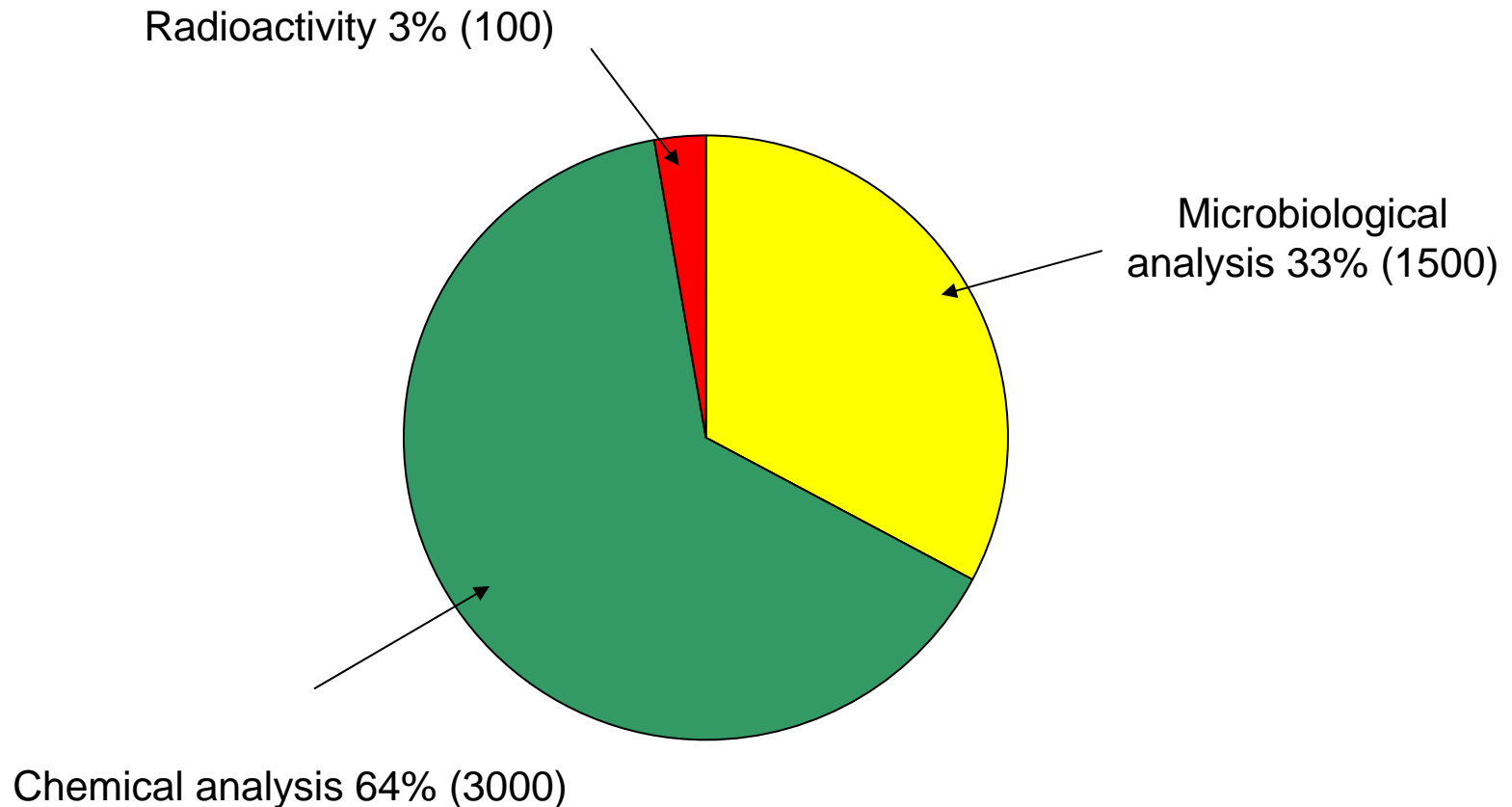
Types of food tested

- About 4700 food samples of various food groups were tested.



N.B.: Figures may not add up to total due to rounding.

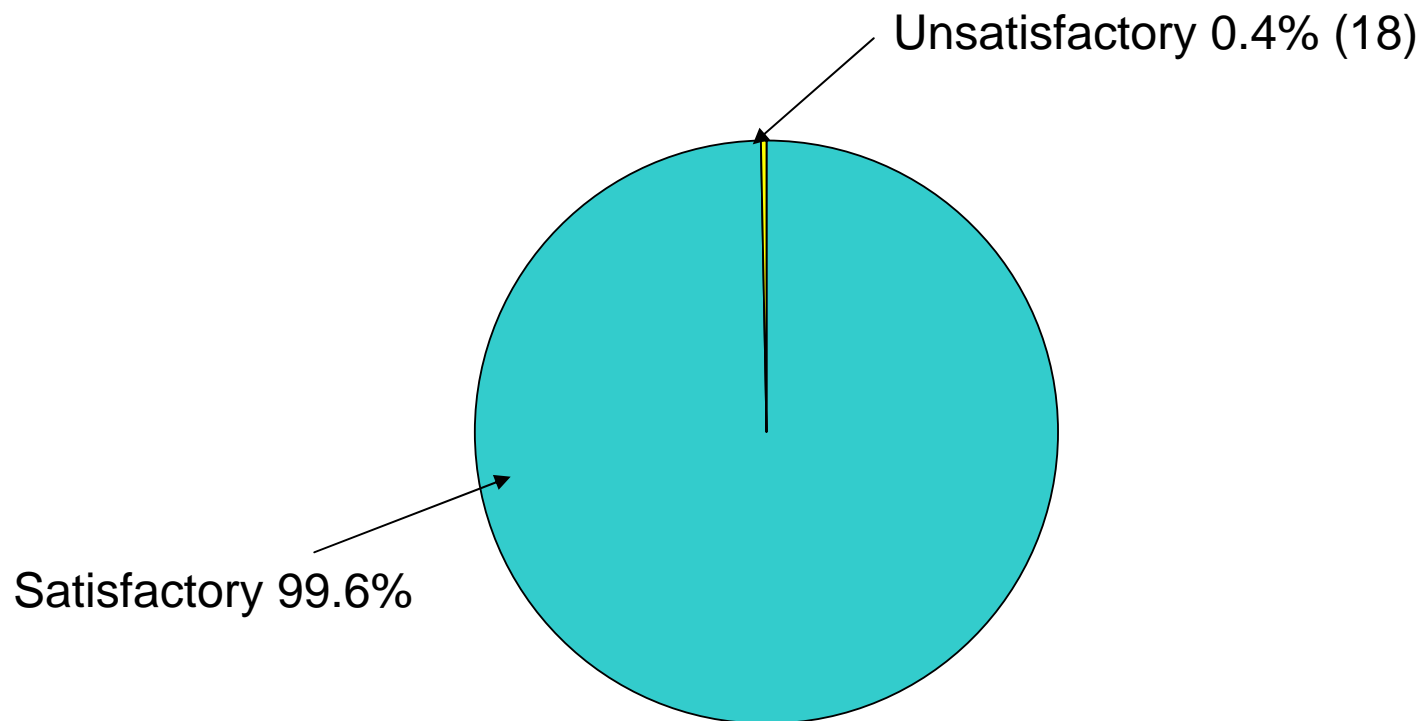
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

- There are 18 unsatisfactory samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%.



Unsatisfactory samples

- 18 unsatisfactory food samples included 3 previously announced results. The remaining 15 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	<i>No. of Samples Tested</i>	<i>No. of Unsatisfactory Samples</i>
Vegetables, fruits & products	1600	10
Meat, poultry & products	500	0
Aquatic products	400	0
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	900	2
Cereal, grains and products	100	1
Others	1100	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>4700</i>	<i>15</i>

N.B.: Figures may not add up to total due to rounding.

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 1600 samples were collected. They included fresh vegetables, fruits and legumes, preserved vegetables and pickled fruits, dried vegetables and ready-to-eat vegetables, etc.
- Analyses included:
 - Microbiological tests
 - Chemical tests such as:
 - Pesticides (e.g., methamidophos, isocarbophos, DDT, HCH)
 - Preservatives (included sulphur dioxide, sorbic acid and benzoic acid)
 - Metallic contamination
 - Colouring matters
- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.3%, with 10 unsatisfactory samples in this report.



1. Vegetables, fruits & products (Cont'd)

Metallic contamination

- There were 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Romaine hearts	Cadmium	0.16 ppm ⁽¹⁾
Chinese white cabbage	Cadmium	0.42 ppm ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ The levels exceeded legal limit. Upon normal consumption, it is unlikely to pose significant health effect on consumers. Long term excessive consumption of Romaine hearts or Chinese white cabbage with the same levels of cadmium may affect the kidneys

Thorough washing and soaking of vegetables will remove some cadmium attached on their surfaces.

1. Vegetables, fruits & products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- Except for the previously announced sample of preserved pummelo, there were 8 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 Dried figs	Sorbic acid	670 ppm ⁽¹⁾
2 Dried raisins	Sulphur dioxide	2400 ppm ⁽²⁾
2 Dried apricots	Sulphur dioxide	2700 & 3000 ppm ⁽²⁾
1 Dried tomato	Sulphur dioxide	510 ppm ⁽²⁾
1 Dried sweet potato	Sulphur dioxide	2000 ppm ⁽²⁾
1 Skinned green chili pepper	Sulphur dioxide	200 ppm ⁽²⁾

^(1,2) The detected levels exceeded the legal limits. Sorbic acid and sulphur dioxide are of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers. For individuals who are allergic to sulphur dioxide, they may have symptoms of breathing difficulty, headache and nausea.

1. Vegetables, fruits & products (Cont'd)

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g. pathogens, pesticides and colouring matters) were satisfactory.

2. Meat, poultry & products

- About 500 samples were collected. They included fresh, chilled and frozen pork, beef and poultry, ready-to-eat dishes of meat and poultry served at food premises, the meat and poultry made products such as sausage and ham, etc.
- Analyses included :
 - Microbiological tests
 - Chemical tests (e.g. preservatives, veterinary drug residues and colouring matters, etc)
- All samples were satisfactory.



3. Aquatic products

- About 400 samples were collected. They generally cover fish, shellfish, shrimp/prawn, crab, squid and their products.
- Analyses included:
 - Microbiological tests (pathogens)
 - Chemical tests (e.g. veterinary drug residues, biotoxins, metallic contamination and preservatives)
- All samples were satisfactory.



4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 900 samples were tested. They included ice-cream, cheese, milk and milk products, etc.
- Analyses included:
 - Microbiological tests (total bacterial count, pathogens, e.g., *Salmonella* and *Listeria*)
 - Chemical tests (melamine, colouring matters and sweeteners)
- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%, with 2 unsatisfactory samples in this report.



4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections (Cont'd)

Microbiological examination

- There were 2 unsatisfactory samples.

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
*A batch of 2 pure cream	Total bacterial counts	31000/g & 61000/g ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Total bacterial count is a hygienic indicator. The detected levels exceeded the legal limit.

* The samples were collected at import level. No stock has been released into the market.

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections (Cont'd)

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g., pathogens, preservatives, melamine and colouring matters) were satisfactory.

5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 100 samples which generally cover rice/noodles, flour, bread and breakfast cereal, etc.
- Analyses included microbiological and chemical tests such as:
 - Preservatives
 - Pesticides
 - Metallic contamination
- Overall satisfactory rate was 98.3%, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.



5. Cereal, grains and products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- Except for the previously announced sample of vegetarian sausage, there was 1 unsatisfactory sample :

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Flour tortillas	Propionic acid	4700 ppm ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ The detected level exceeded the legal limit. Propionic acid is of low toxicity. It should not pose significant health effect on consumers.

5. Cereal, grains and products (Cont'd)

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g., pesticides and metallic contamination) were satisfactory.

6. Other food commodities

- About 1100 samples were collected. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%, with 2 unsatisfactory samples in this report.
- Types of food included:

Mixed dishes □ Pathogens & preservatives	Condiments and sauces □ Colouring matters & preservatives
Dim Sum □ Pathogens & preservatives	Snacks □ Colouring matters & preservatives
Beverages □ Sweeteners & colouring matters	Eggs and egg products □ Colouring matters
Sushi and sashimi □ Microbiological examination	Others
Sugar and sweets □ Colouring matters & metallic contamination	

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Chemical analysis

- Except for the previously announced sample of white cabbage and pork dumpling, all samples were satisfactory.

Microbiological analysis

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Baked rice with seafood	<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	1400000/g ⁽¹⁾
Baked rice with salmon and cheese	<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	230000/g ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ *Clostridium perfringens* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Follow-up actions

- Trace source of food items in question
- Request vendors to stop sale and dispose of incriminated food items
- Issue warning letters to concerned vendors
- Take follow-up samples for analysis
- Take prosecution actions if there is sufficient evidence

Advices to trade

- Excessive use of preservatives in food was the major problem detected in this report. The food trade should comply with the legal requirements and follow “good manufacturing practice” (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.
- The pure cream samples containing excessive total bacterial counts reflected unsatisfactory sanitary condition. The importer should source foods from reliable food manufacturer. They should also ensure that the dairy products have been properly heat-treated and, hygienic practice along the production line as well as good environmental hygiene have been maintained.
- Food premises should always follow the “5 Keys to Food Safety” during food preparation to prevent foodborne disease. Semi-cooked ingredients (e.g., steamed rice and sauce) should be kept under appropriate temperature (above 60°C ; at or below 4°C). The baked rice should be effectively reheated or baked thoroughly with the centre temperature reaching 75 degrees Celsius or above.

Advices to consumers

- Patronize reliable retailers
- The detection of excessive cadmium in vegetable samples was an individual case. Fruit and vegetables are important components of a healthy diet as they are good sources of dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. The public is advised to take a balanced diet so as to avoid excessive exposure to contaminants from a small range of food items.
- To soak and wash vegetables thoroughly before consumption to remove some cadmium attached on the surface.