Food Safety Report for December 2009

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

January 2010

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

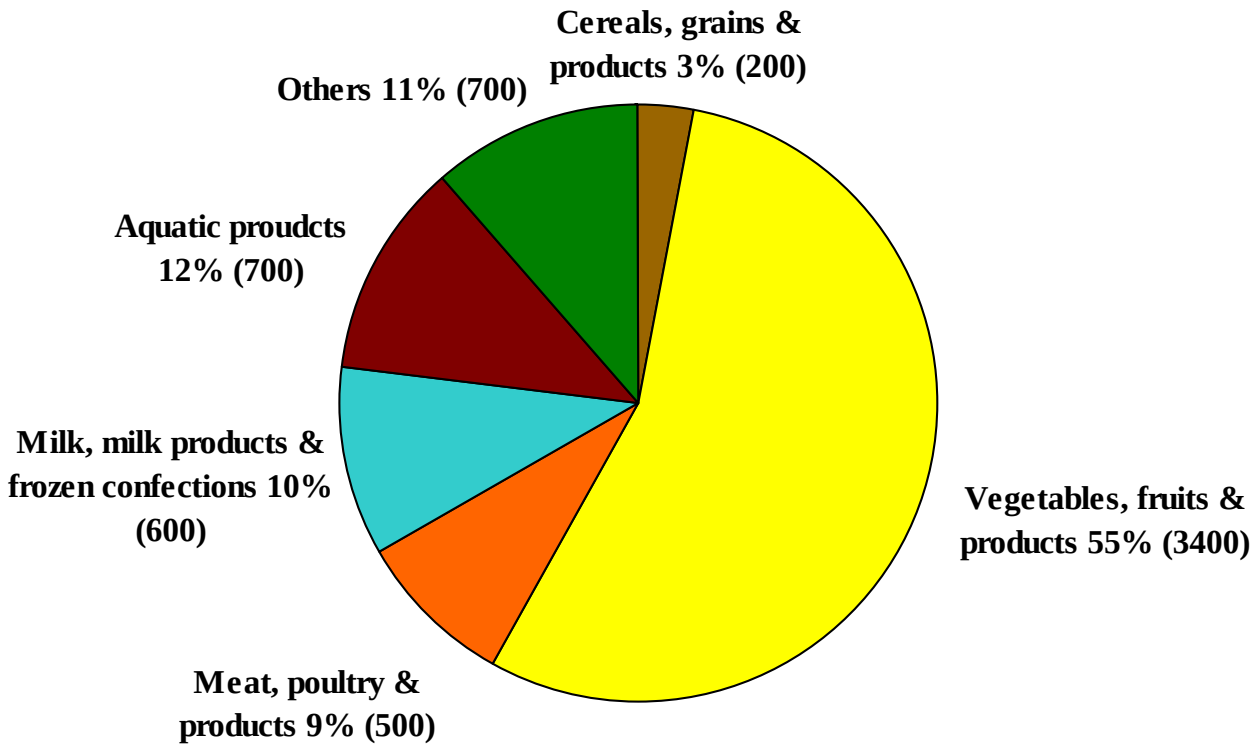
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e., routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.

- 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 recently:
  - "Preservatives in preserved fruits and vegetables"
  - "Lunar New Year Food"

- This presentation gives an account of the food surveillance sample analyses that were completed in December 2009.

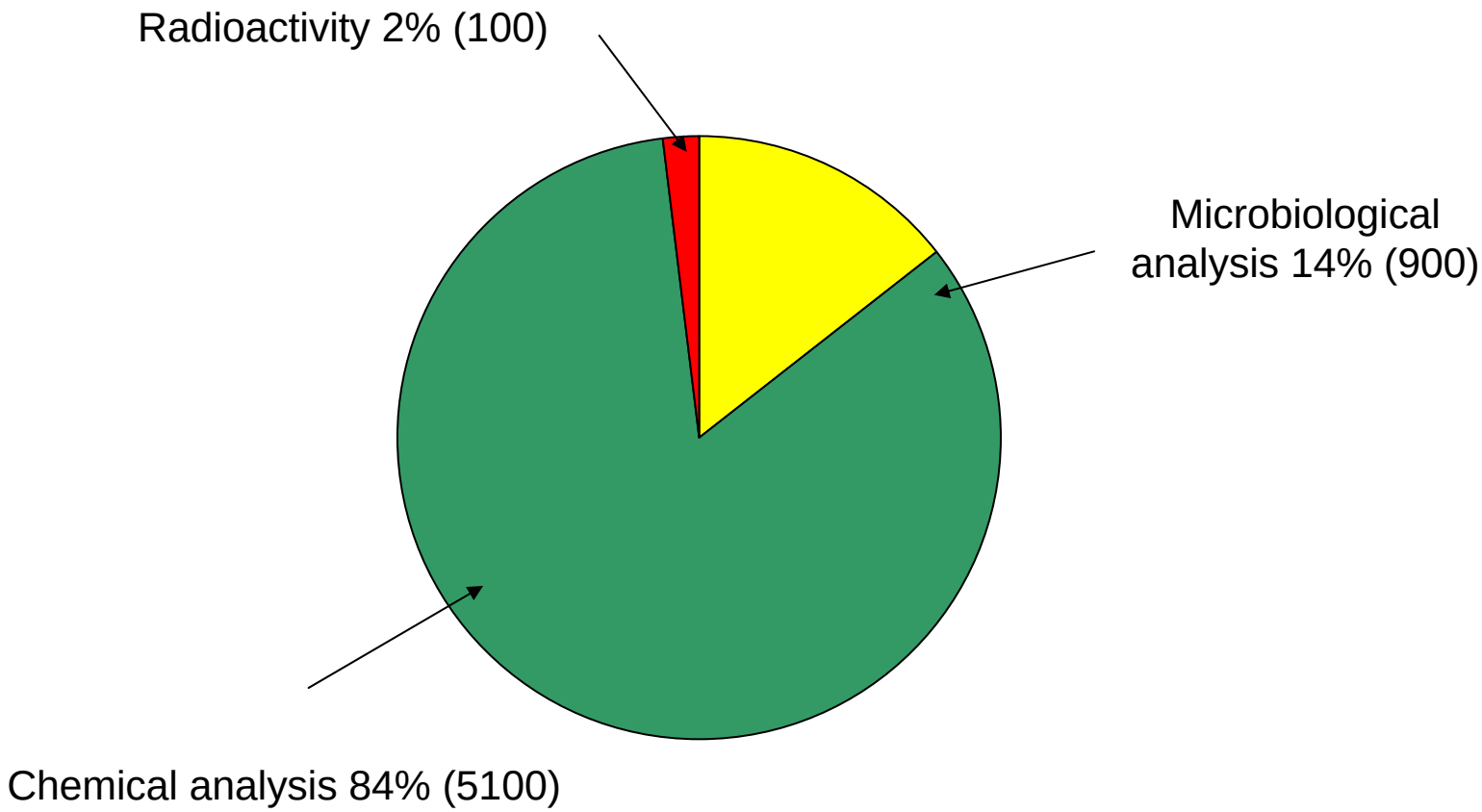
Types of food tested

- About 6100 food samples of various food groups were tested.



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

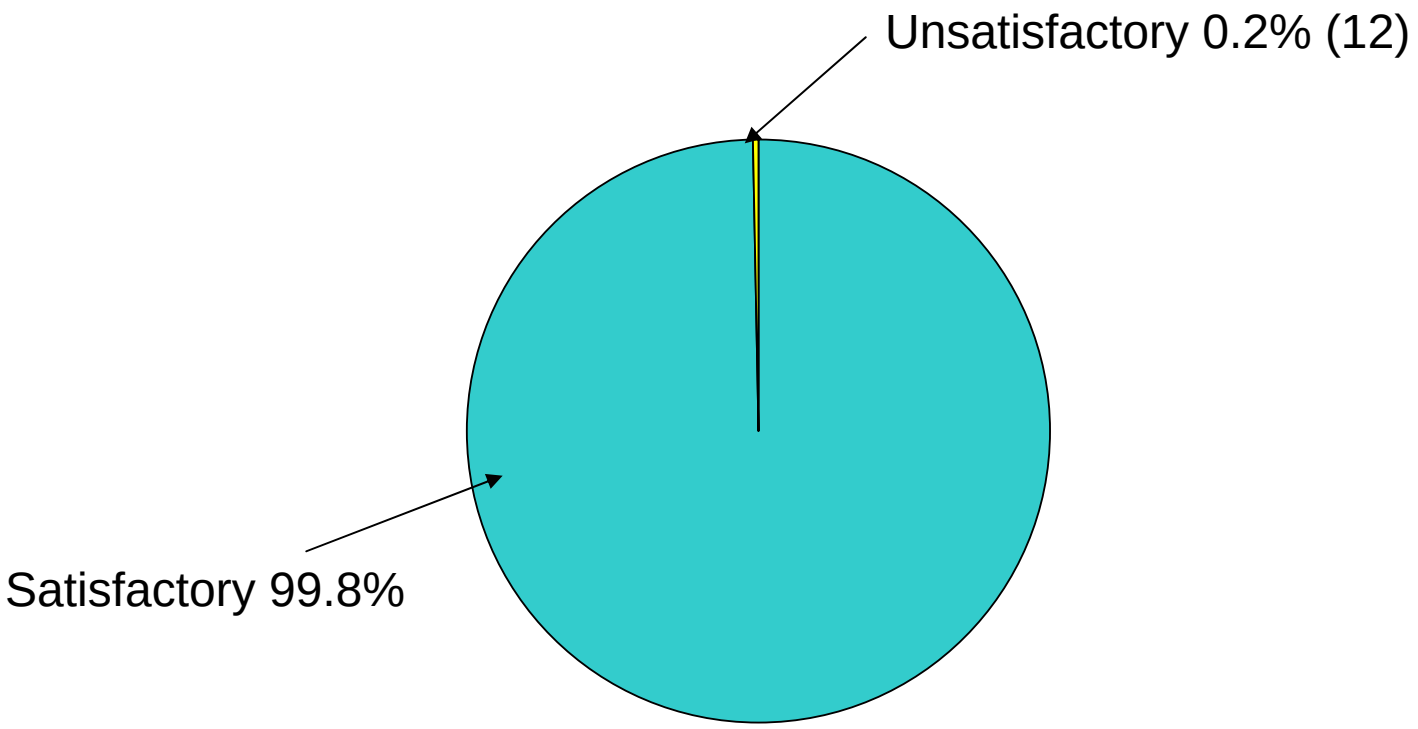
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

- There are 12 unsatisfactory samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%.



Unsatisfactory samples

- 12 unsatisfactory food samples included 6 previously announced results. The remaining 6 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	*No. of Samples Tested*	*No. of Unsatisfactory Samples*
Vegetables, fruits & products	3400	0
Meat, poultry & products	500	3
Aquatic products	700	2
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	600	0
Cereal, grains and products	200	0
Others	700	1
Total	***6100***	***6***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 3400 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
- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%. Except for the 5 previously announced unsatisfactory samples of preserved vegetables and fruits, all other samples 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 and veterinary drug residues, etc)

- All samples was 99.4%, with 3 samples in this report.





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2. Meat, poultry & products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
2 Fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	74 - 1600 ppm (1)

(1) Sulphur dioxide is not permitted in fresh (including chilled and frozen) meat. On the other hand, it is permitted in foods such as pickled fruits and juices. It is of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers. For individuals who are allergic to this preservative, there may be symptoms of breathing difficulty, headache and nausea. Since it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking.

2. Meat, poultry & products (Cont'd)

Pathogens

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Cooked chicken	*Staphylococcus aureus*	22000/g (1)

(1) *Staphylococcus aureus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

2. Meat, poultry & products (Cont'd)

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g., veterinary drug residues) were satisfactory.

3. Aquatic products

- About 700 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)

- The overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%, with 2 samples in this report.




3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Metallic contamination

- There was 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Frozen swordfish	Mercury	1 ppm (1)

(1) The detected level exceeded legal limit. Normal consumption will not cause adverse health effects to consumers, but long-term excessive consumption may exceed safety level.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Veterinary drug residues

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 frozen shrimp	AOZ	0.002 ppm (1)

(1) The detected level was low and is unlikely to pose adverse effects on consumers upon normal consumption.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- Except for the previously announced sample of noodlefish which was found to contain formaldehyde, all other samples were satisfactory.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g., pathogens and biotoxins) were satisfactory.

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 600 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)

- All samples were satisfactory.

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5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 200 samples which generally cover rice/noodles, flour, bread and breakfast cereal, etc.
- Analyses included microbiological and chemical tests such as:
  - Preservatives
  - Pesticides
  - Toxins
- All samples were satisfactory.




6. Other food commodities

- About 700 samples were collected. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.
- Types of food included:

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

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Microbiological analysis

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Chicken noodles	*Staphylococcus aureus*	110000/g (1)

(1) *Staphylococcus aureus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Chemical analysis

- All samples were satisfactory.

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 and consumers

- In most cases, the exceedances or breaches were not serious and would not pose adverse health effect to the public.
- 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.
- *Staphylococcus aureus* is commonly present in human skin, hair and nasal cavity. High dose of such bacteria present in food indicates that cross contamination due to poor personal hygiene of the food handlers has likely taken place. Food handlers should always observe good personal and wash their hands properly before handling food. If there is a wound on the hand, cover it properly with a waterproof bandage or wear a glove before handling food.
- Pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children are the susceptible groups being affected by mercury. When choosing food, they should avoid eating large predatory fish. Consumers should also maintain a balanced diet to minimize food risk.