Food Safety Report for February 2009

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

March 2009

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

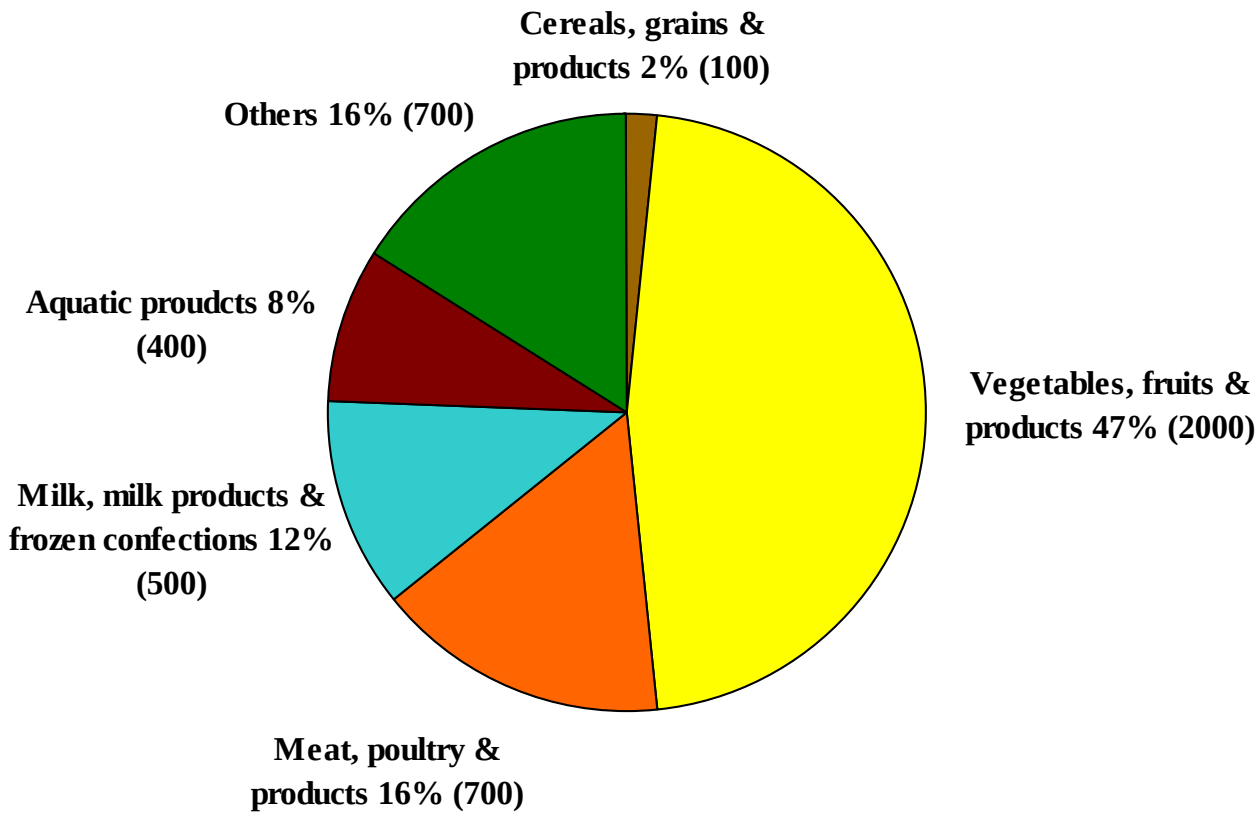
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e., routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.

- Starting from 2009, CFS will release 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 a recently completed targeted food surveillance project on “Preservatives in preserved vegetables and pickled fruits”.

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

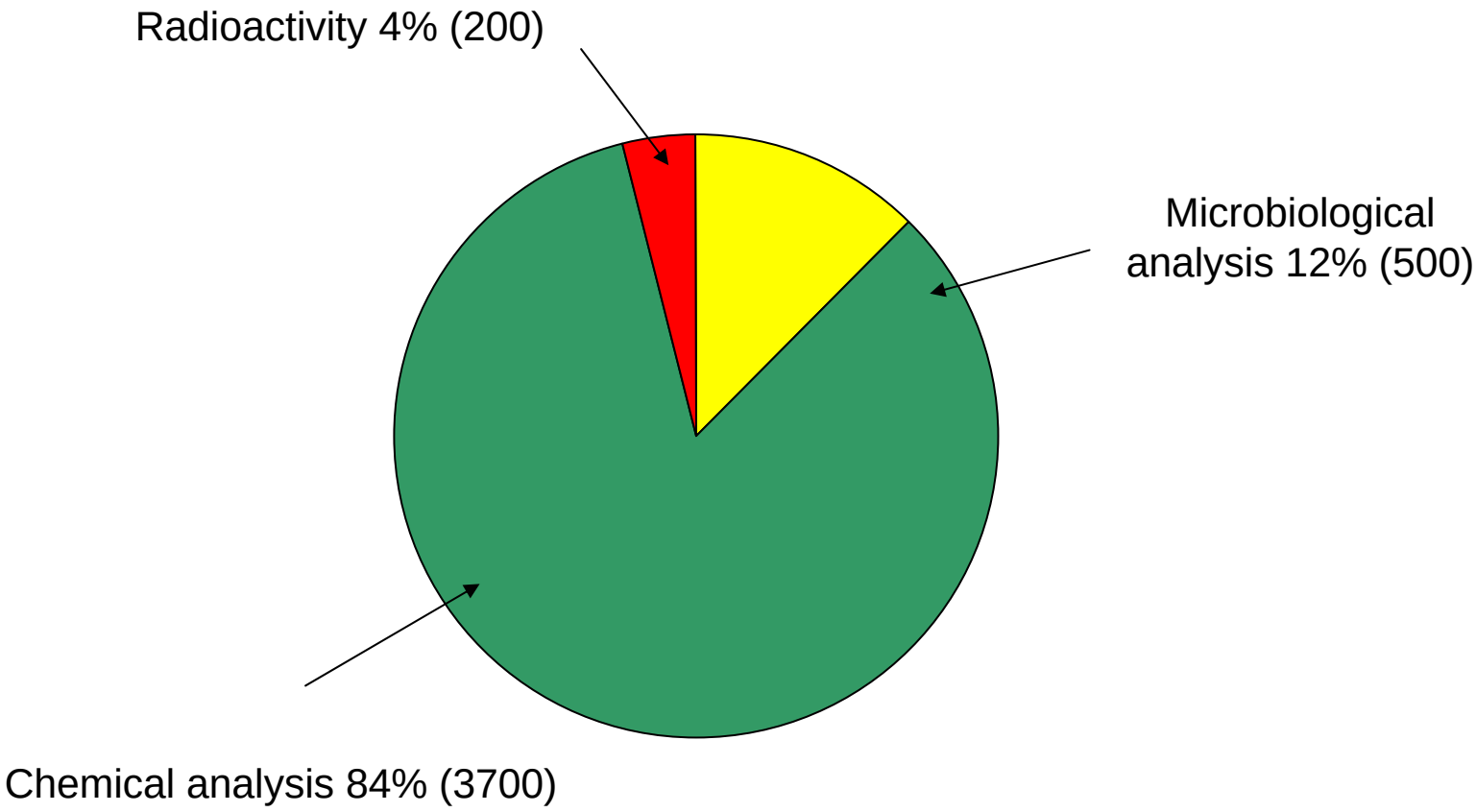
Types of food tested

- About 4400 food samples of various food groups were tested.



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

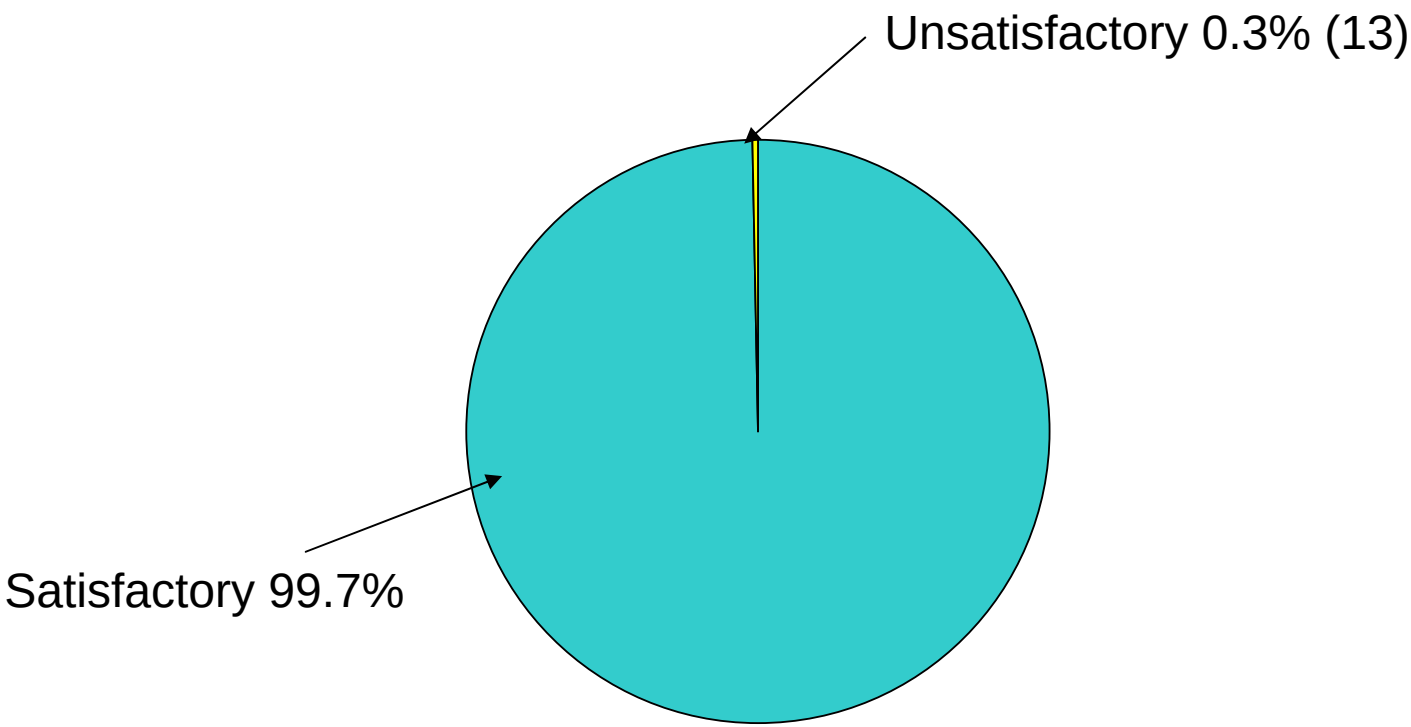
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

- Total 13 unsatisfactory samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%.



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Unsatisfactory samples

- 13 unsatisfactory food samples included 4 previously announced results. The remaining 9 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	*No. of Samples Tested*	*No. of Unsatisfactory Samples*
Vegetables, fruits & products	2000	0
Meat, poultry & products	700	8
Aquatic products	400	0
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	500	0
Cereal, grains and products	100	0
Others	700	1
Total	***4400***	***9***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 2000 samples were collected. They included various kinds of fresh vegetables, fruits and legumes, preserved vegetables and pickled fruits, dried vegetables and ready-to-eat vegetables, etc.



- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests such as:
    - Pesticides (e.g., methamidophos, isocarbophos, DDT, HCH)
    - Preservatives (included sulphur dioxide, sorbic acid and benzoic acid)
    - Colouring matters

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%. Except for the 3 previously announced unsatisfactory samples of preserved vegetables and fruits, all other samples were satisfactory.

2. Meat, poultry & products

- About 700 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.

- Analysis included :
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests (e.g. preservatives, veterinary drug residues and colouring matters, etc)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 98.8%, with 8 unsatisfactory samples in this report.





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

Preservatives

- There were 8 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
8 fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	14 - 6500 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)

Other tests

- The remaining samples for other tests (e.g., pathogens, veterinary drug residues and colouring matters) were satisfactory.

3. Aquatic products

- About 400 samples were collected. They generally cover fish, shellfish, shrimp/prawn, crab, squid and their products.

- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests (norovirus, pathogens)
  - Chemical tests (e.g. veterinary drug residues, biotoxins, metallic contamination and preservatives)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%. Except for the previously announced unsatisfactory sample of frozen tuna fillet, all other samples were satisfactory.




4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 500 samples were tested. They included ice-cream, cheese, milk and milk products, etc.

- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests (total bacterial count, pathogens, e.g., *Salmonella* and *Listeria*)
  - Chemical tests (melamine, toxins, sweeteners)

- All samples were satisfactory.

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Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
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5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 100 samples which generally cover rice/noodles, flour, bread and breakfast cereal, etc.
- Analysis included microbiological and chemical tests such as:
  - metallic contamination
  - preservatives
  - colouring matters
- 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, colouring matters & preservatives	Condiments and sauces ❑ Colouring matters & preservatives
Dim Sum ❑ Pathogens, preservatives & colouring matters	Snacks ❑ Colouring matters & preservatives
Beverages ❑ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners	Eggs and egg products ❑ Melamine & colouring matters
Sushi and sashimi ❑ Microbiological examination	Others
Sugar and sweets ❑ Sweeteners, colouring matters & preservatives	

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Microbiological analysis

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Rice with BBQ pork and roasted duck	*Clostridium perfringens* (pathogen)	1.1×10^5 (1)

(1) *Clostridium perfringens* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as 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

Summary

- In most cases, the exceedances or breaches were not serious and would not pose adverse health effect to the public.
- The major problem in this report was the use of non-permitted food additive, sulphur dioxide in fresh meat. The trade should comply with legal requirements and follow “good manufacturing practice” (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.
- There was a ready-to-eat food sample found to contain unacceptable level of pathogen. Summer is approaching and the risk of food poisoning will increase. The trade should always follow the “5 Keys to Food Safety” to prevent foodborne diseases. The consumers should patronize licensed and reliable restaurants.
  - Choose - Choose safe raw materials
  - Clean - Keep hands and utensils clean
  - Separate - Separate raw and cooked food
  - Cook - Cook thoroughly
  - Safe Temperature - Keep food at safe temperature