Food Safety Report for March 2009

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

April 2009

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

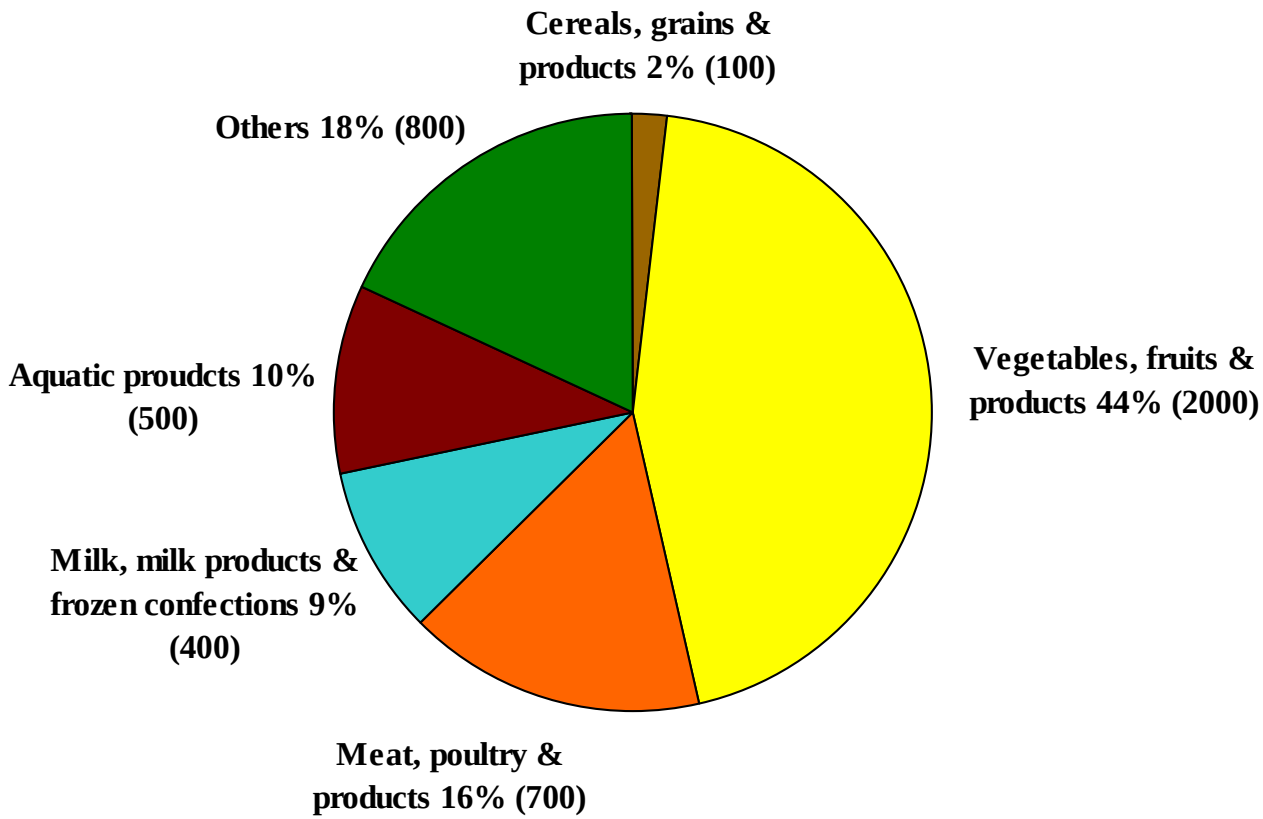
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e., routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.

- 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 survey on popular food items on “Cart noodles”.

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

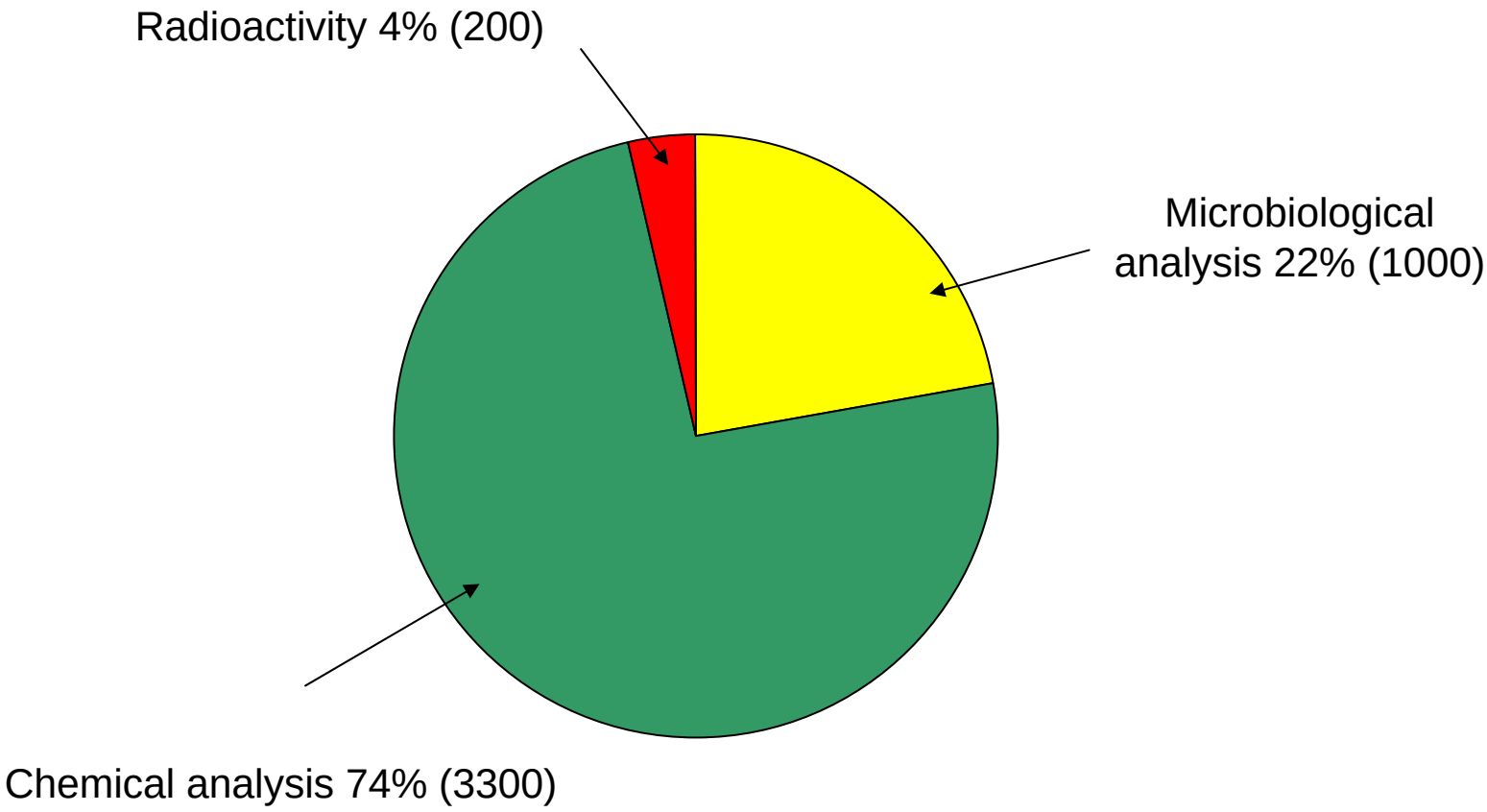
Types of food tested

- About 4500 food samples of various food groups were tested.



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

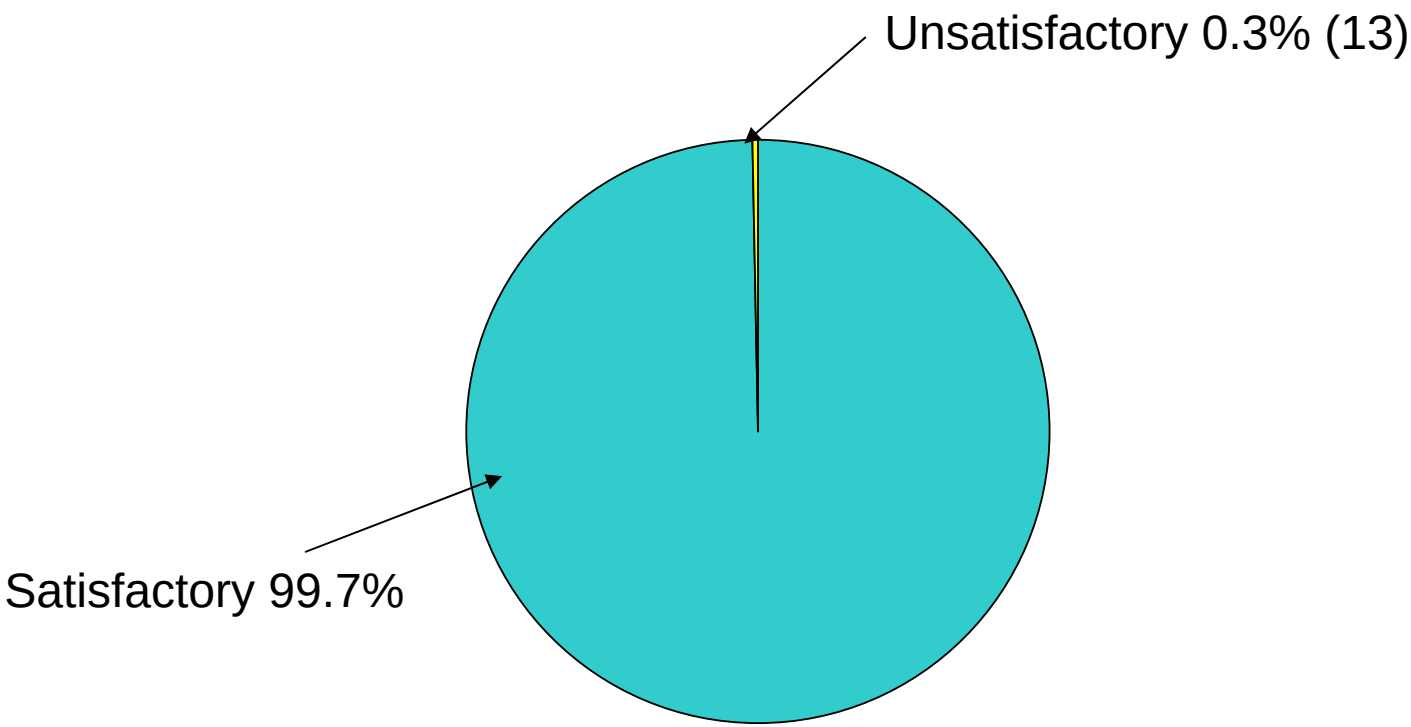
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

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



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	5
Aquatic products	500	2
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	400	0
Cereal, grains and products	100	1
Others	800	1
Total	***4500***	***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 99.9%. Except for the 2 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 99.2%, with 5 unsatisfactory samples in this report.





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

Veterinary drug residues

- There was 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Frozen suckling pig	Sulfonamides	0.34 ppm (1)

(1) The level exceeded legal limit but based on the detected level, it is unlikely to pose adverse effect on consumers upon normal consumption,.

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

Preservatives

- There were 4 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
4 fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	20-2300 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

- Except for the previously announced unsatisfactory sample of cooked cattle offal, all other samples for other tests (e.g., pathogens and colouring matters) were satisfactory.

3. Aquatic products

- About 500 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. colouring matters, biotoxins, preservatives and metallic contamination)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.3, with 2 unsatisfactory samples in this report.




3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Colouring matters

- There was 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Chilled yellow croaker	Tartrazine	Detected (1)

(1) Tartrazine is a permitted colouring matter in food but is not allowed in chilled fish. It is of low toxicity and should not pose adverse effect on consumers.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- There was 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Dried conch slice	Sulphur dioxide	7300 ppm (1)

(1) A commonly used preservative but the detected levels exceeded legal limits. Sulphur dioxide is of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers. For individuals who are allergic to this preservative, they may have symptoms of breathing difficulty, headache and nausea. Since it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Other tests

- Except for the previously announced unsatisfactory sample of baby oyster meat, all other samples for other tests (e.g., pathogens) were satisfactory.

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 400 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, colouring matters, sweeteners)

- All samples were satisfactory.

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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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.




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

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample :

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Japanese style ramen	Benzoic acid	2100 ppm (1)

(1) A commonly used preservative but the detected level exceeded legal limit. It is of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers.

6. Other food commodities

- About 800 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 & sweeteners	Eggs and egg products ❑ Colouring matters
Sushi and sashimi ❑ Microbiological examination	Others
Sugar and sweets ❑ Sweeteners, colouring matters & preservatives	

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Chemical analysis

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Steamed rice cup cake	Sorbic acid (preservative)	2000 ppm (1)

(1) A commonly used preservative but the detected level exceeded legal limit. It is of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers.

Microbiological 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 excessive or non-permitted food additives including preservatives and colouring matters. The trade should comply with legal requirements and follow “good manufacturing practice” (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.

- The consumers should patronize reliable premises for buying food. They should maintain balanced diet to minimize food risk.