Food Safety Report for May 2009

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

June 2009

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

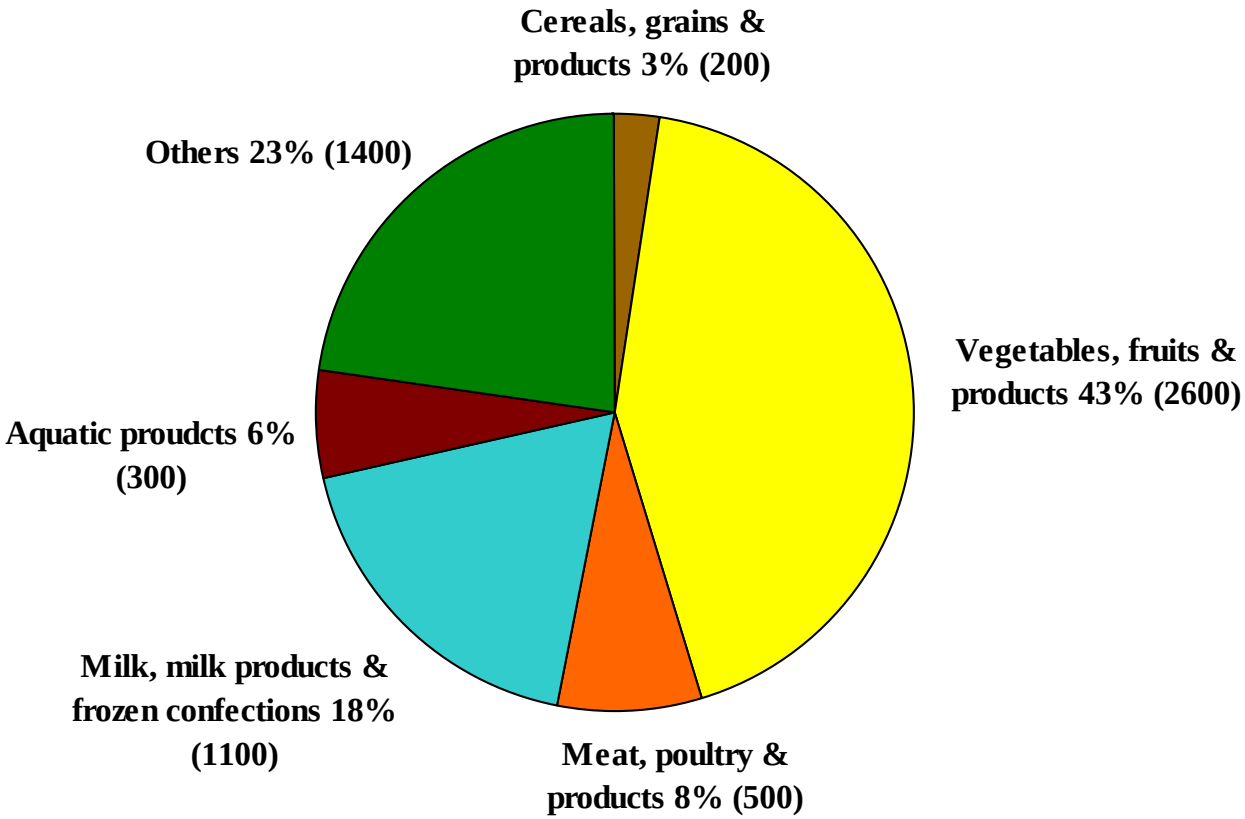
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e., routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.

- The 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 4 recently completed targeted food surveillance projects on “Sudan dyes in eggs and egg products”, “Microbiological quality of ice-cream and frozen confections”, “Microbiological quality of lunch boxes” and “Microbiological quality of prepackaged food that required reheating before consumption” and a survey on popular food items: “Hong Kong-style desserts”.

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

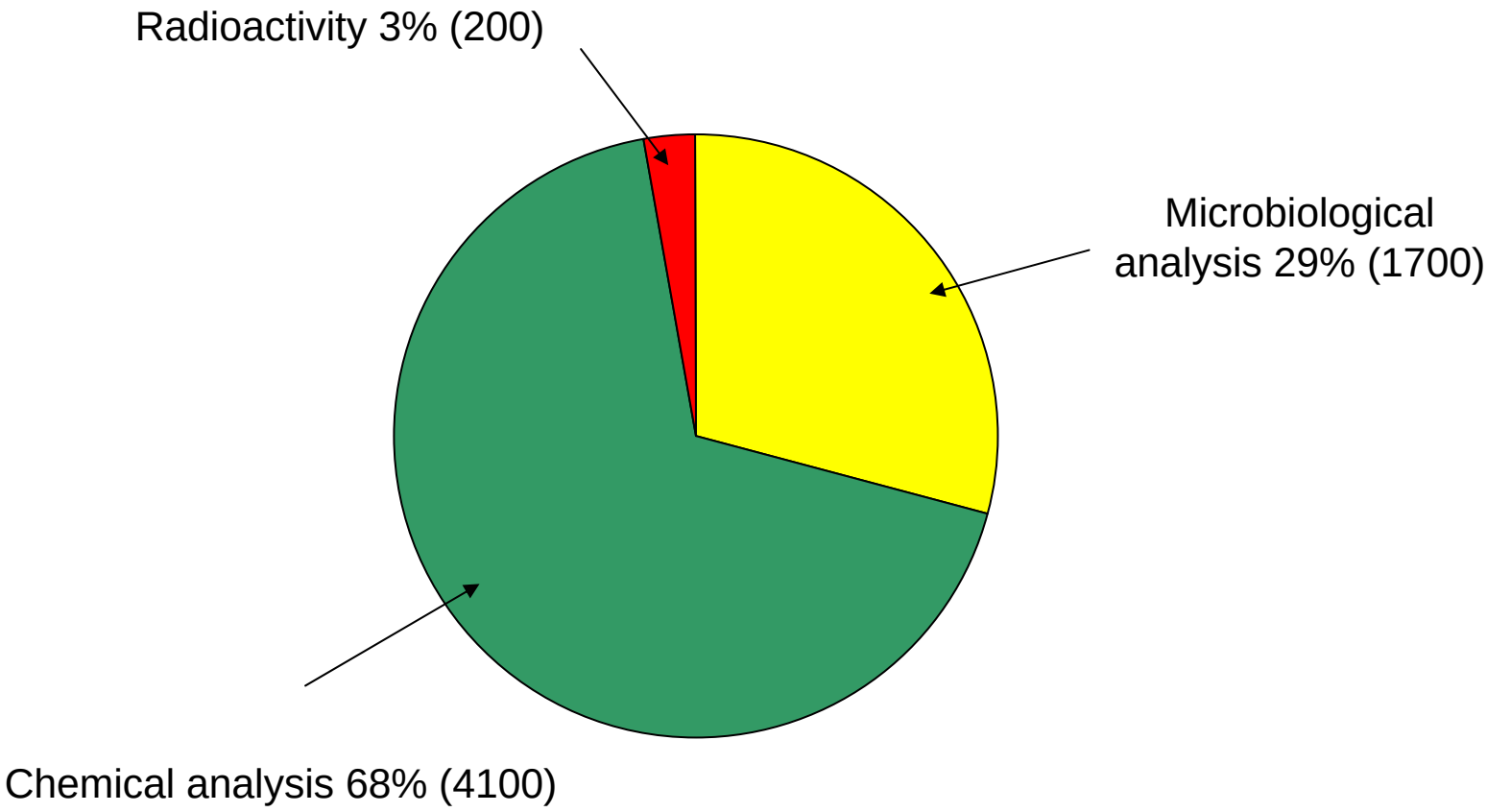
Types of food tested

- About 6000 food samples of various food groups were tested.



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

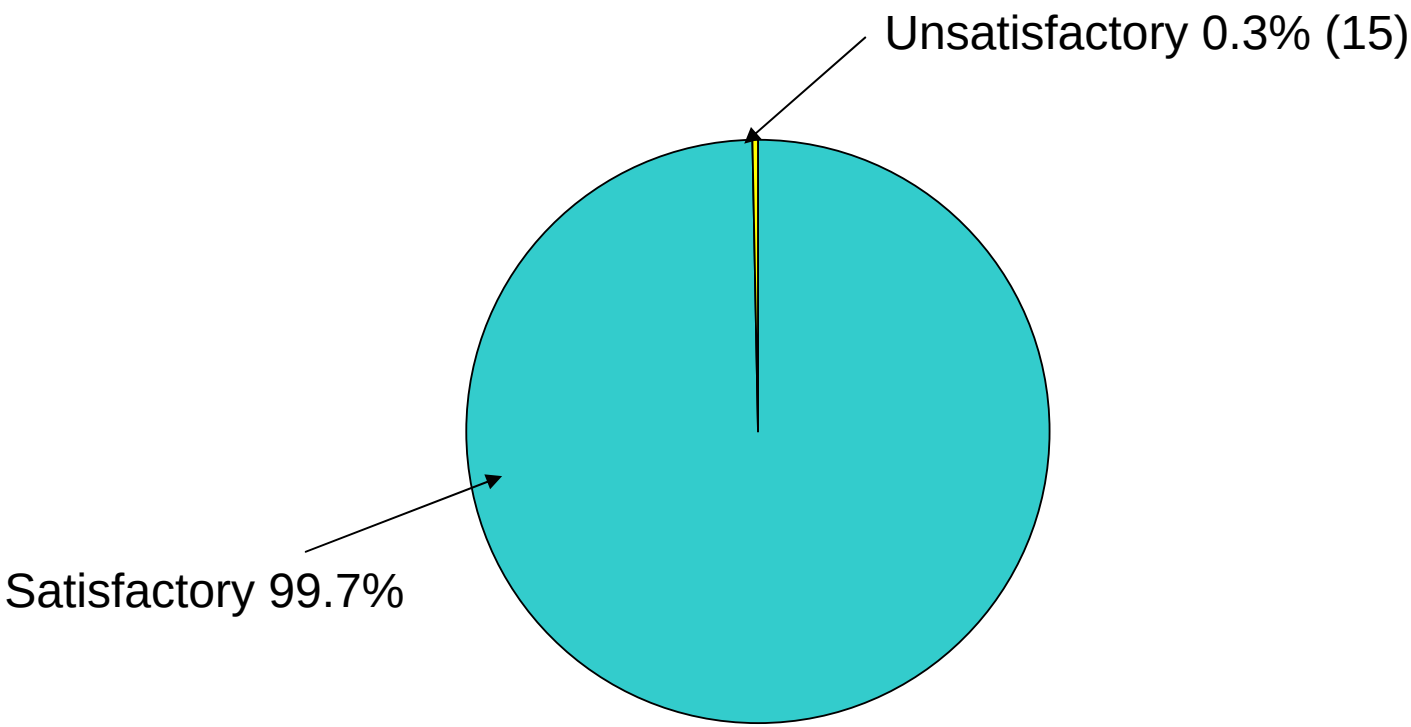
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

- Total 15 unsatisfactory samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%.



Unsatisfactory samples

- 15 unsatisfactory food samples included 8 previously announced results. The remaining 7 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	***No. of Samples Tested***	***No. of Unsatisfactory Samples***
Vegetables, fruits & products	2600	0
Meat, poultry & products	500	2
Aquatic products	300	3
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	1100	0
Cereal, grains and products	200	0
Others	1400	2
Total	***6000***	***7***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 2600 samples were collected. They included 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)
    - Metallic contamination
    - Colouring matters
- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.96%. Except for one previously announced unsatisfactory sample of root starch jelly, 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.

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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%, with 2 unsatisfactory samples in this report.





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

Preservatives

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Spanish sausage	Sorbic acid	150 ppm (1)
Fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	15 ppm (2)

(1) A commonly used preservative but is not permitted in this kind of food. It is of low toxicity and should not pose significant health effect on consumers.

(2) 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

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

3. Aquatic products

- About 300 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 99.1 %, with 3 unsatisfactory samples in this report.




3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Metallic contamination

- 3 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Fresh oysters	Cadmium	2.7 – 3.0 ppm (1)

(1) Detected levels exceeded legal limit. Based on the cadmium levels detected, it is unlikely to pose adverse effect on consumer upon normal consumption. Long term excessive consumption of oysters with the same level of cadmium may affect the kidney.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Other tests

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

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 1100 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 (antibiotics, colouring matters, melamine, sweeteners)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.5%. Except for the 5 previously announced unsatisfactory samples of ice-cream, all other 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.
- Analysis included microbiological and chemical tests such as:
  - metallic contamination
  - preservatives
  - colouring matters
- All samples were satisfactory.




6. Other food commodities

- About 1400 samples were collected. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%, with 2 unsatisfactory samples 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 and sweeteners
Beverages ❑ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners	Eggs and egg products ❑ Colouring matters
Sushi and sashimi ❑ Microbiological examination	Others
Sugar and sweets ❑ Colouring matters, metallic contamination & preservatives	

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Chemical analysis

- Except for the 2 previously announced unsatisfactory samples of sweet soup, there were 2 other unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Chinese red bun	Rhodamine B (Colouring matter)	Detected (1)
Nopal juice (3)	Benzoic acid (preservative) Sorbic acid (preservative)	720 ppm (2) 610 ppm (2)

(1) Not permitted in food.

(2) Commonly used preservatives but the sum of the proportion of individual levels of these 2 preservatives detected has exceeded the legal limit. Benzoic acid and sorbic acid are of low toxicity that they should not pose significant health effect on consumers.

(3) In March 2009, CFS collected 2 samples of nopal juice from the importer at the same time for testing of sweeteners and preservatives. The unsatisfactory result on sweetener has been announced in the Food Safety Report for April 2009. This report (Food Safety Report for May 2009) announces the unsatisfactory results on preservatives.

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

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

- The exceedances or breaches in this report were not serious. They would not pose adverse health effect to the public.
- The problems mainly involved inappropriate use of preservatives and colouring matters as well as the detection of excessive levels of metallic contamination in food. 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.
- Marine bivalves are high risk foods of containing pathogens (e.g., norovirus and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*). Consumers should cook them thoroughly before eating.