Food Safety Report for June 2009

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

August 2009

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

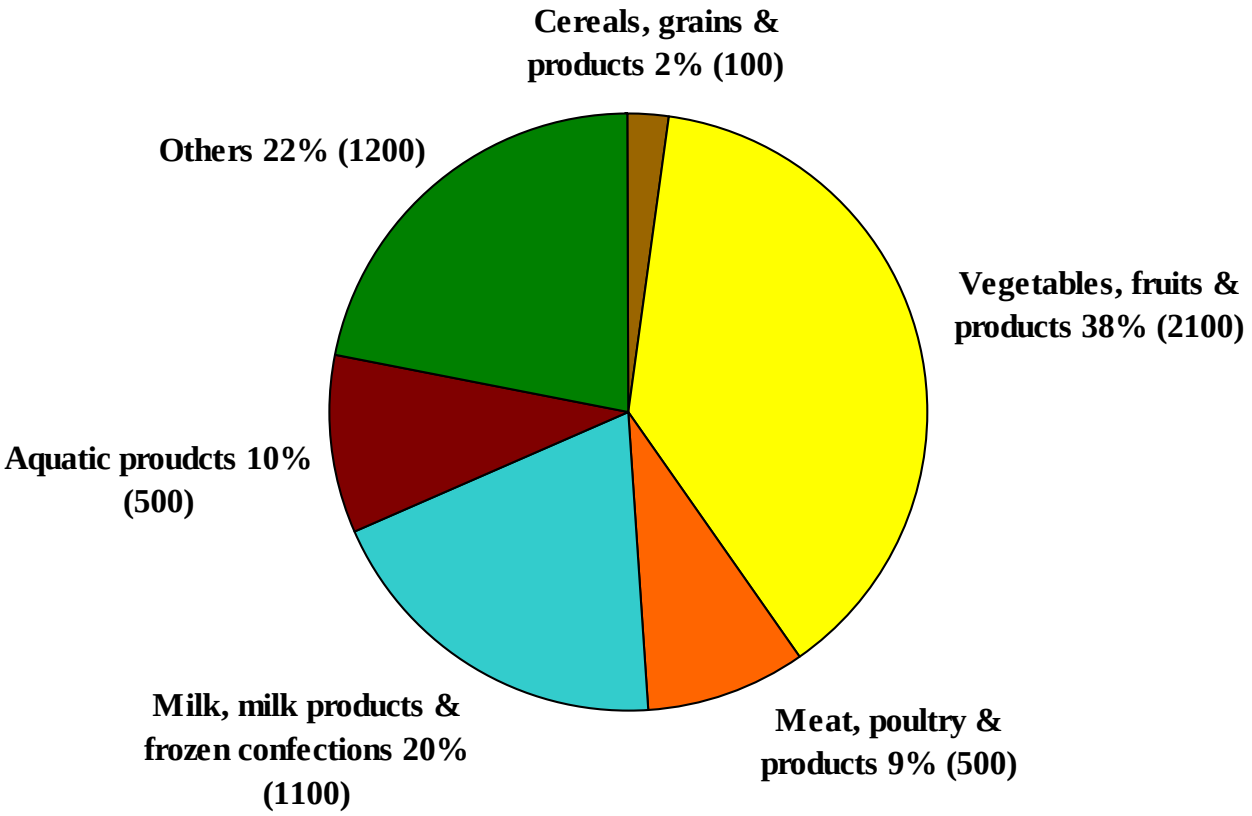
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e., routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.

- 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, the CFS has released the new batch of results of a targeted project on “Microbiological quality of ice-cream and frozen confections” recently.

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

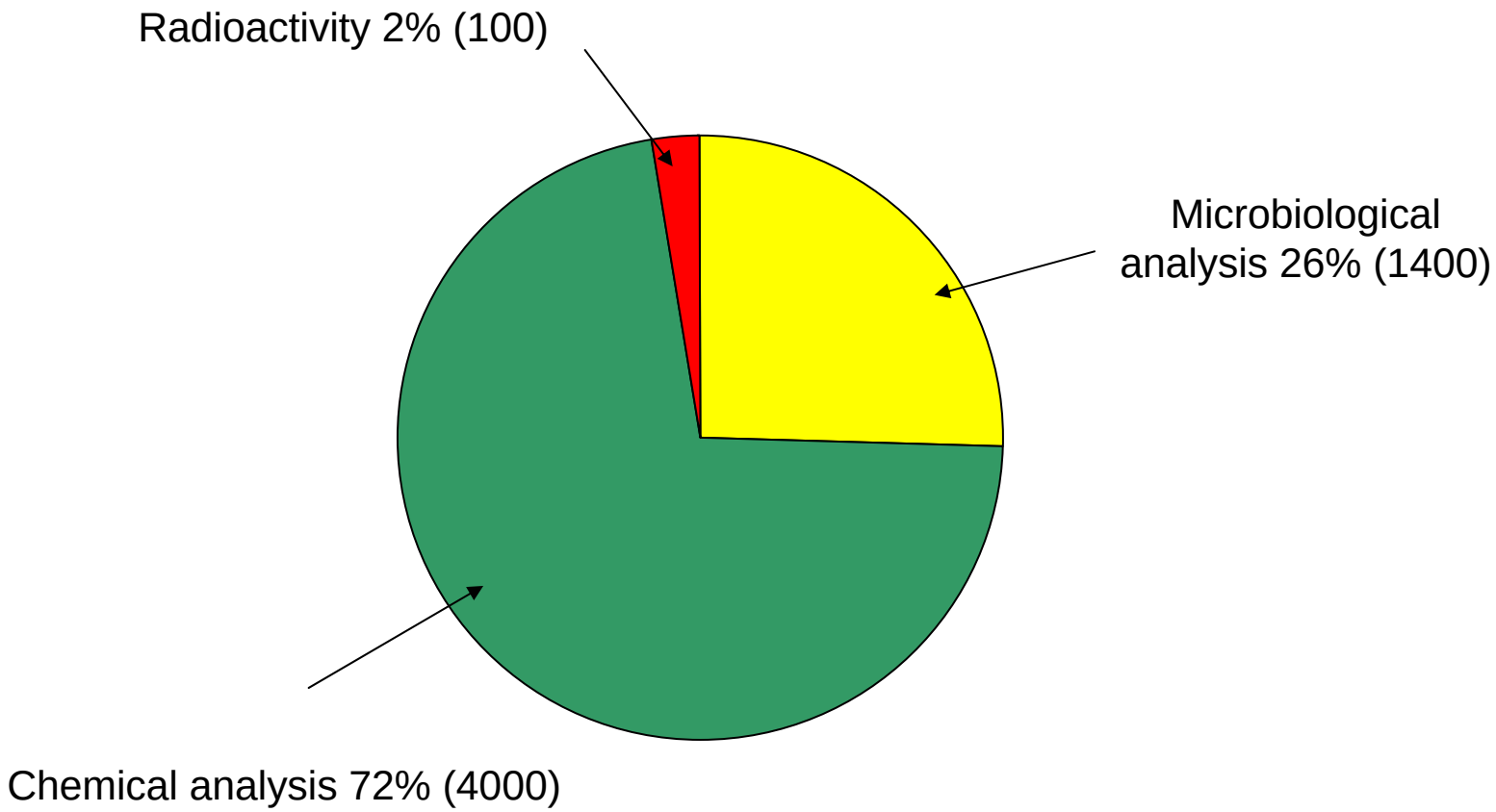
Types of food tested

- About 5600 food samples of various food groups were tested.



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

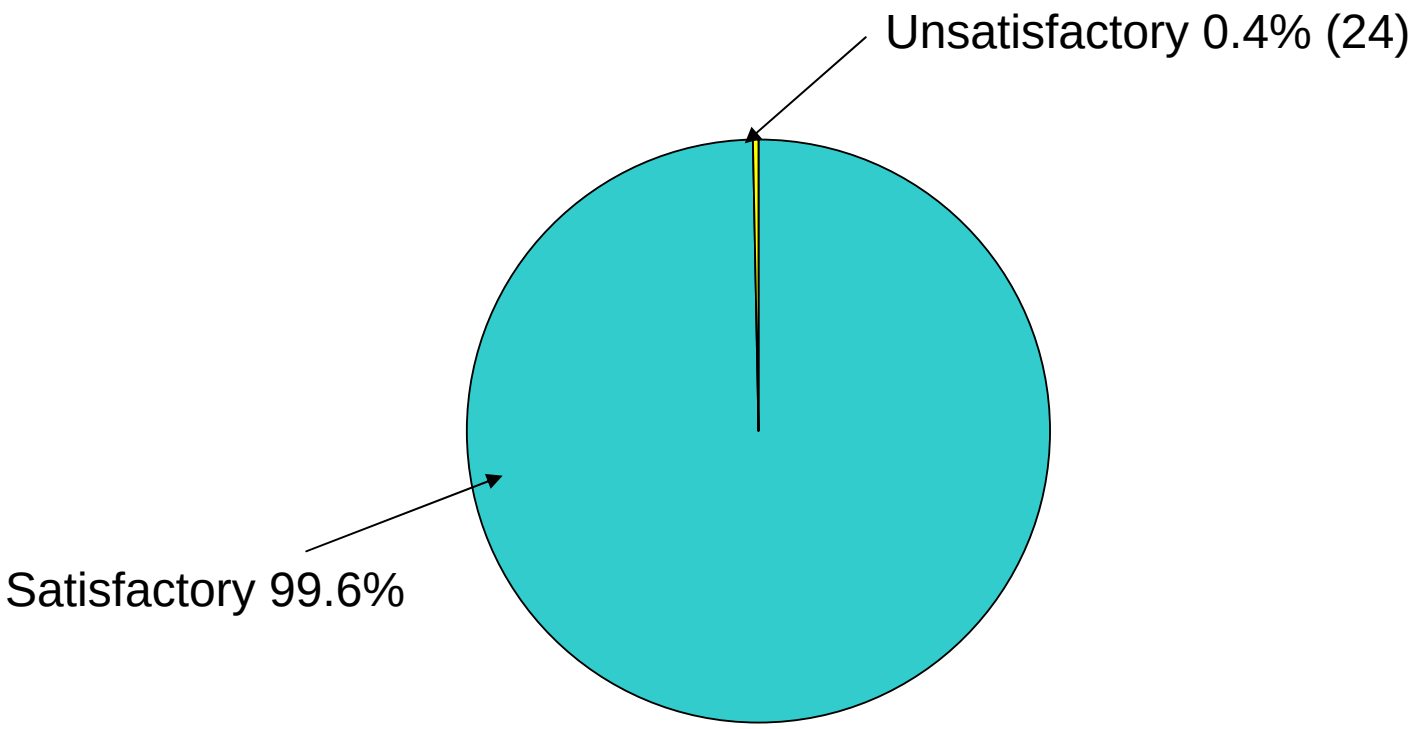
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

- Total 24 unsatisfactory samples. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%.



Unsatisfactory samples

- 24 unsatisfactory food samples included 7 previously announced results. The remaining 17 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	***No. of Samples Tested***	***No. of Unsatisfactory Samples***
Vegetables, fruits & products	2100	1
Meat, poultry & products	500	1
Aquatic products	500	3
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	1100	10
Cereal, grains and products	100	0
Others	1200	2
Total	***5600***	***17***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 2100 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 99.95 %, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.

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

Metallic contamination

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Fresh mushroom	Cadmium	0.24 ppm (1)

(1) The levels exceeded legal limit but upon normal consumption, it is unlikely to pose adverse effect on consumers. Thorough washing and soaking of vegetables will remove some cadmium attached on their surfaces.

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

Other tests

- The remaining samples for other tests (e.g., pathogens, pesticides, preservatives 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.

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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.





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

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	8200 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

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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.4 %, with 3 unsatisfactory samples in this report.




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3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Metallic contamination

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Frozen scampi	Cadmium	16 ppm (1)

(1) The detected level exceeded legal limit. Long term consumption of scampi with the same level of cadmium may affect the kidney.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- There was 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Dried fish maw	Sulphur dioxide	48 ppm (1)

(1) The detected level exceeded legal limit. 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)

Veterinary drug residues

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Grouper	AOZ	0.0023 ppm (1)

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

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 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 (colouring matters, melamine and preservatives)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 98.5%, with 10 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Microbiological examination

- Besides the 6 previously announced unsatisfactory samples of ice-cream, there were another 10 unsatisfactory samples.

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
*A batch of 5 ice-cream bar	Coliform organisms	570-990/g (1)
*A batch of 5 ice-cream	Coliform organisms	140-230/g (1)

(1) Coliform organisms is a hygienic indicator. The detected levels exceeded the legal limit.

* The concerned samples were from the first consignments of two brand new products imported into Hong Kong. All samples were collected at import level for hold and test. Upon receiving the results, all affected batches of products have been marked and sealed. 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, antibiotics, colouring matters, melamine and sweeteners) were satisfactory.

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 1200 samples were collected. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%, 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	Eggs and egg products ❑ Colouring matters
Sushi and sashimi ❑ Microbiological examination	Others
Sugar and sweets ❑ Colouring matters, metallic contamination & sweeteners	

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Chemical analysis

- Besides the previously announced unsatisfactory sample of sweet soup, there were 2 other unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Tartar sauce	Benzoic acid (preservative) Sorbic acid (preservative)	660 ppm (1) 650 ppm (1)
Sesame flavoured crispy sticks	Stevioside (sweetener)	Detected (2)

(1) 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.

(2) Not permitted in food. It is of low toxicity and should not pose adverse effect on consumers.

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

- Most exceedances or breaches in this report were not serious.
- The ice-cream and ice-cream bar samples containing excessive coliform organisms reflected unsatisfactory sanitary condition. The importer should source frozen confections from reliable food manufacturer. They should also ensure that the frozen confections have been properly pasteurized and, hygienic practice along the production line as well as good environmental hygiene have been maintained.
- For the samples detected with excessive or non-permitted metallic contamination, preservatives, veterinary drugs and sweetener, 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.