Food Safety Report for March 2011

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

April 2011

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

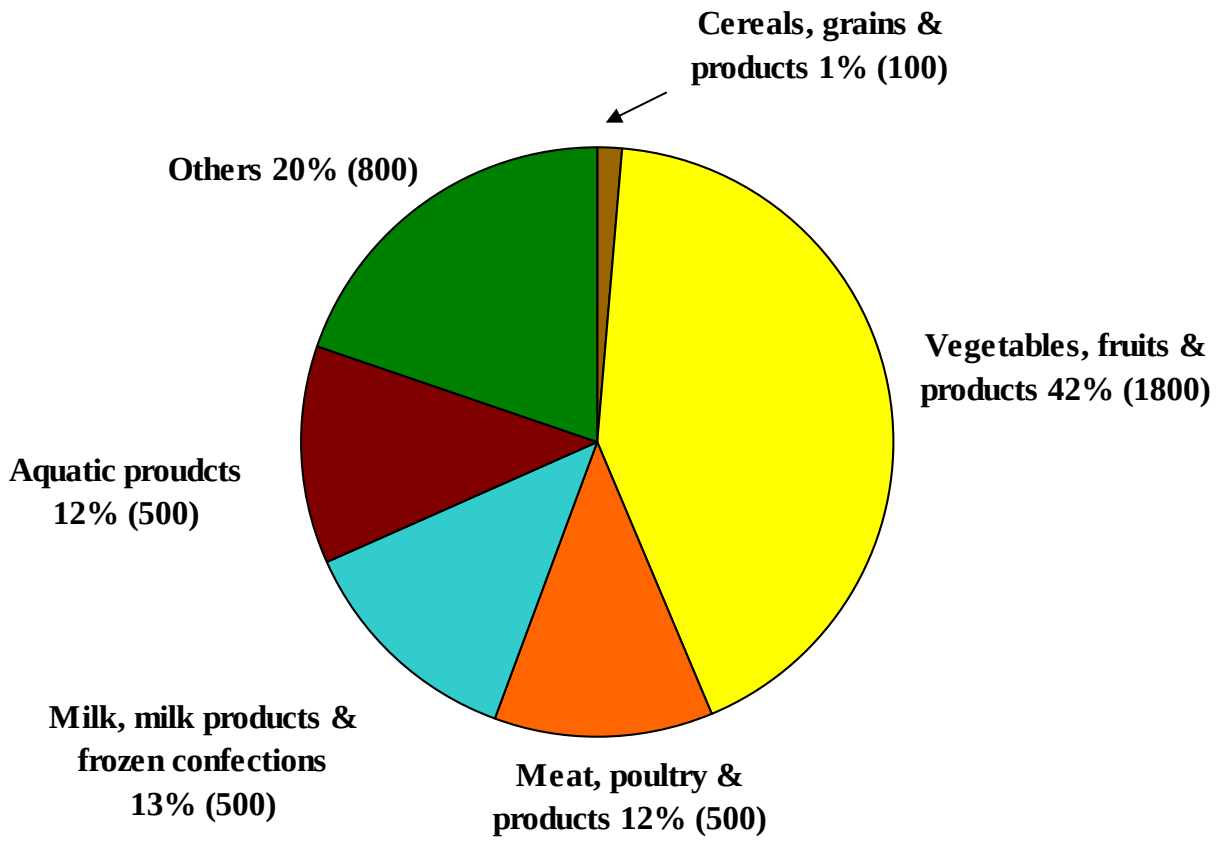
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- The CFS releases the “Food Safety Report” every month so as to allow the public to obtain the latest food safety information timely.

- This presentation gives an account of the food surveillance sample result analyses in March 2011.

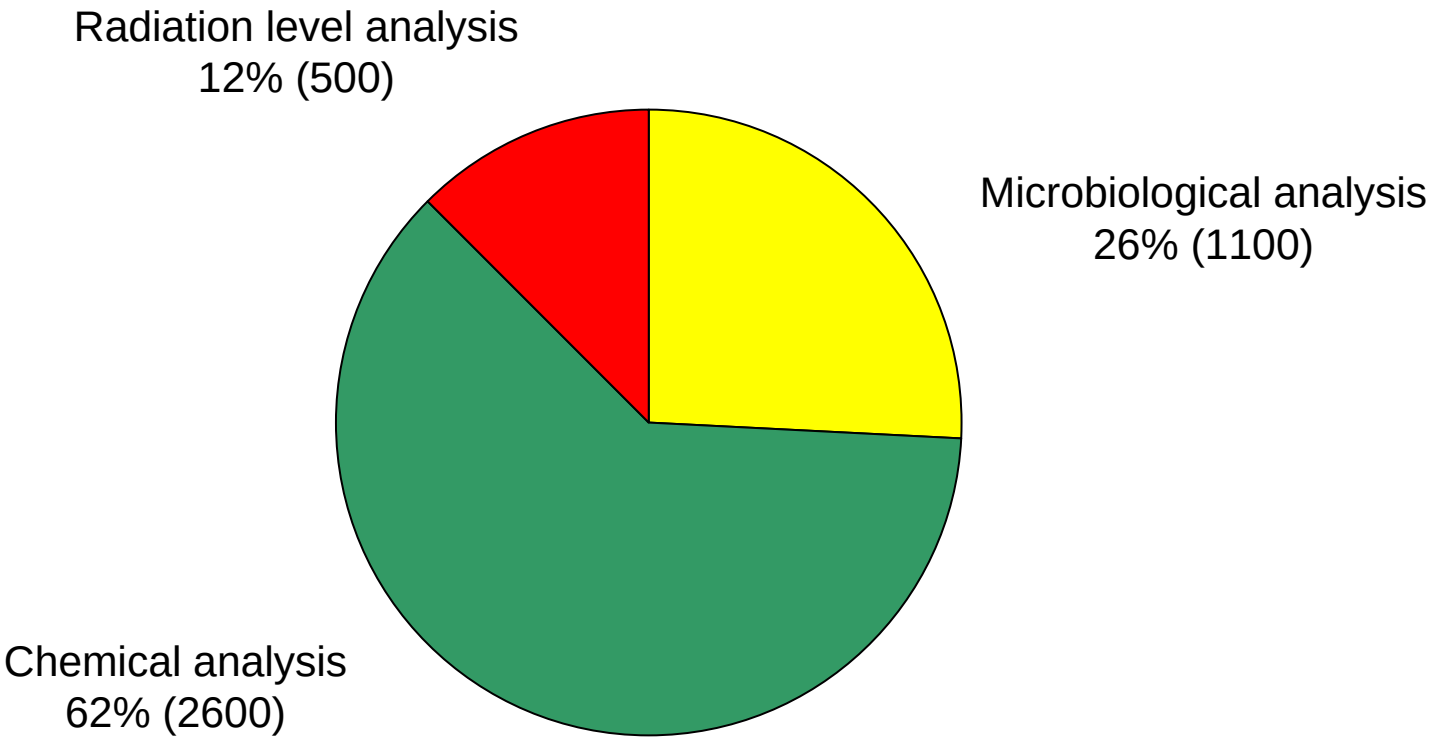
Types of food tested

- About 4200 food samples of various food groups were tested.



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

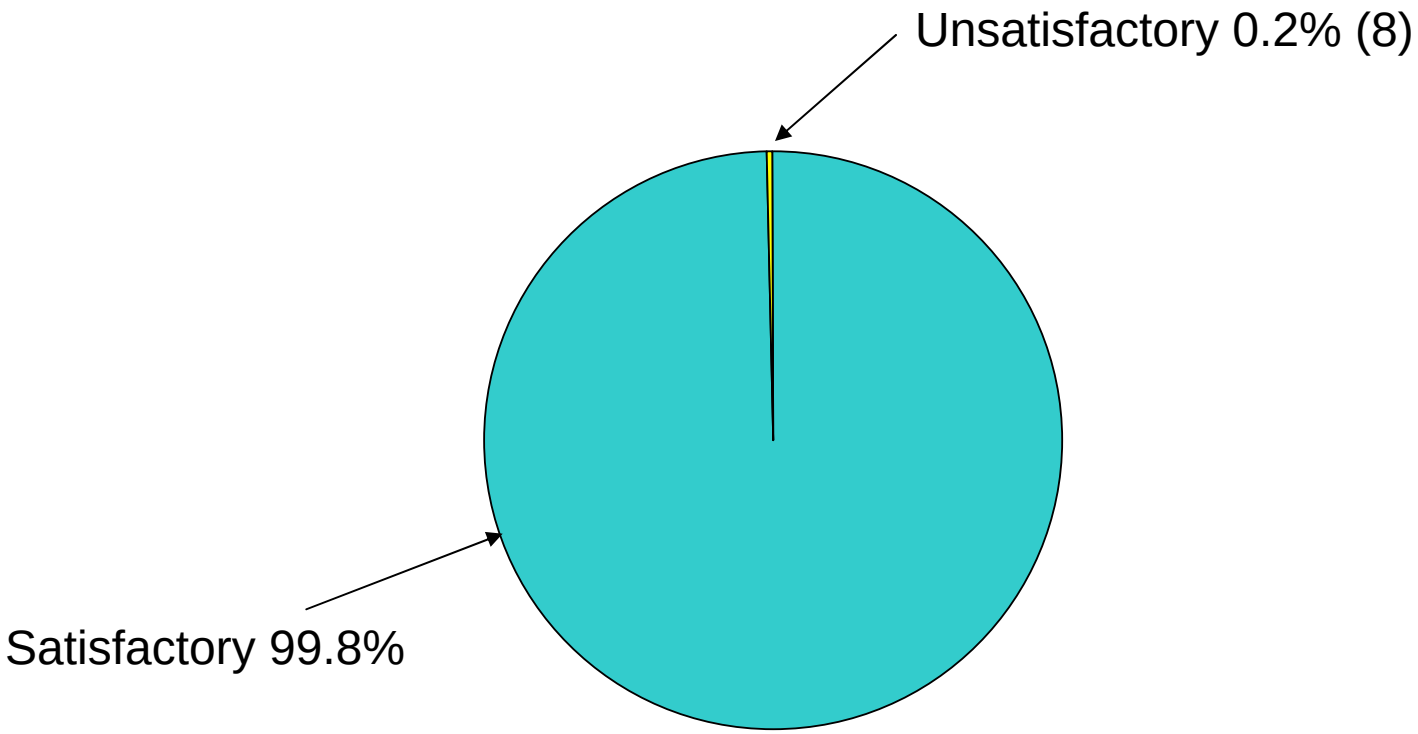
Types of testing



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

Overall results

- There were 8 unsatisfactory samples in total. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%.



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Unsatisfactory samples

- 8 unsatisfactory food samples included 3 previously announced results. The remaining 5 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	***No. of Samples Tested***	***No. of Unsatisfactory Samples***
Vegetables, fruits & products	1800	1
Meat, poultry & products	500	3
Aquatic products	500	1
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	500	0
Cereal, grains & products	100	0
Others	800	0
Total	***4200***	***5***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 1800 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.



- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests such as:
    - Pesticides (e.g., methamidophos, isocarbophos, DDT, HCH)
    - Preservatives
    - Colouring matters
    - Metallic contamination
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%. Apart from the previously announced unsatisfactory samples of 1 white radish, 1 turnip and 1 spinach, there was 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.

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

Metallic contamination

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Spinach	Cadmium	0.16 ppm (1)

(1) The level exceeded the legal limit. Upon normal consumption, it is unlikely to pose adverse health effect on consumers. Long term excessive consumption of spinach with the same levels of cadmium may affect the kidneys. Thorough washing and soaking of vegetables will remove 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 Chinese preserved meat, sausage and ham.

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

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





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

Preservatives

- 3 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
2 Fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	70 & 470 ppm (1)
1 Dried pork slice	Butylated hydroxytoluene (B.H.T.)	510 ppm (2)

(1) Sulphur dioxide is not permitted for using in fresh (including chilled and frozen) meat. It is of low toxicity and will not cause adverse health effects upon normal consumption. For individuals who are allergic to this preservative, there may be symptoms like breathing difficulty, headache and nausea.

(2) The level exceeded the legal limit. However, based on the detected level, it is unlikely to pose adverse heath effect upon normal consumption.

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

Other tests

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

3. Aquatic products

- About 500 samples were collected. They generally covered fish, shellfish, shrimp/prawn, crab, squid and their products.

- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests (e.g. preservatives, biotoxins and veterinary drug residues)
  - Radiation level tests

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




3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Noodlefish	Formaldehyde	1900 ppm(1)

(1) Occasional consumption of the noodlefish with the detected level will not cause adverse health. However, abdominal pain, vomiting and kidney problems cannot be ruled out for high consumers.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Other tests

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

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

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

- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests (total bacterial count and pathogens , e.g. *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes*)
  - Chemical tests (e.g. melamine, preservatives, colouring matters, sweeteners and veterinary drug residues)
  - Radiation level tests

- All samples were satisfactory.




5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 100 samples included rice/noodles, flour, bread and breakfast cereal.
- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests (e.g. preservatives, colouring matters and metallic contamination)
  - Radiation level tests
- All samples were satisfactory.




6. Other food commodities

- About 800 food samples were collected. Types included:

Mixed dishes ▫ Pathogens, preservatives & colouring matters	Condiments and sauces ▫ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners
Dim Sum ▫ Pathogens & preservatives	Snack ▫ Pathogens, preservatives & colouring matters
Beverages ▫ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners	Eggs and egg products ▫ Colouring matters & melamine
Sushi and sashimi ▫ Microbiological tests	Others
Sugar and sweets ▫ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners	

- 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.

Advice to the trade

- Should comply with the legal requirements and follow Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.
- Under existing legislation, formaldehyde is not permitted for use as a food preservative. Contravention of the law could lead to a maximum fine of $50,000 and six months' imprisonment.
- Maintain a proper cold chain to ensure that fish and fish products are kept safely throughout processes including storage, transportation and display for sale.
- Source food from reliable suppliers. Maintain a good recording system to allow source tracing if needed.

Advice to consumers

- Should patronize reliable premises for buying food. They should also maintain balanced diet to minimize food risk.
- Choose only fish that are fresh and avoid those with unusual smell; and avoid buying noodlefish that are stiff (formaldehyde could stiffen flesh of fish).
- Wash and cook food products thoroughly as formaldehyde is water soluble and could dissipate upon heating.