Food Safety Report for August 2011

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

September 2011

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

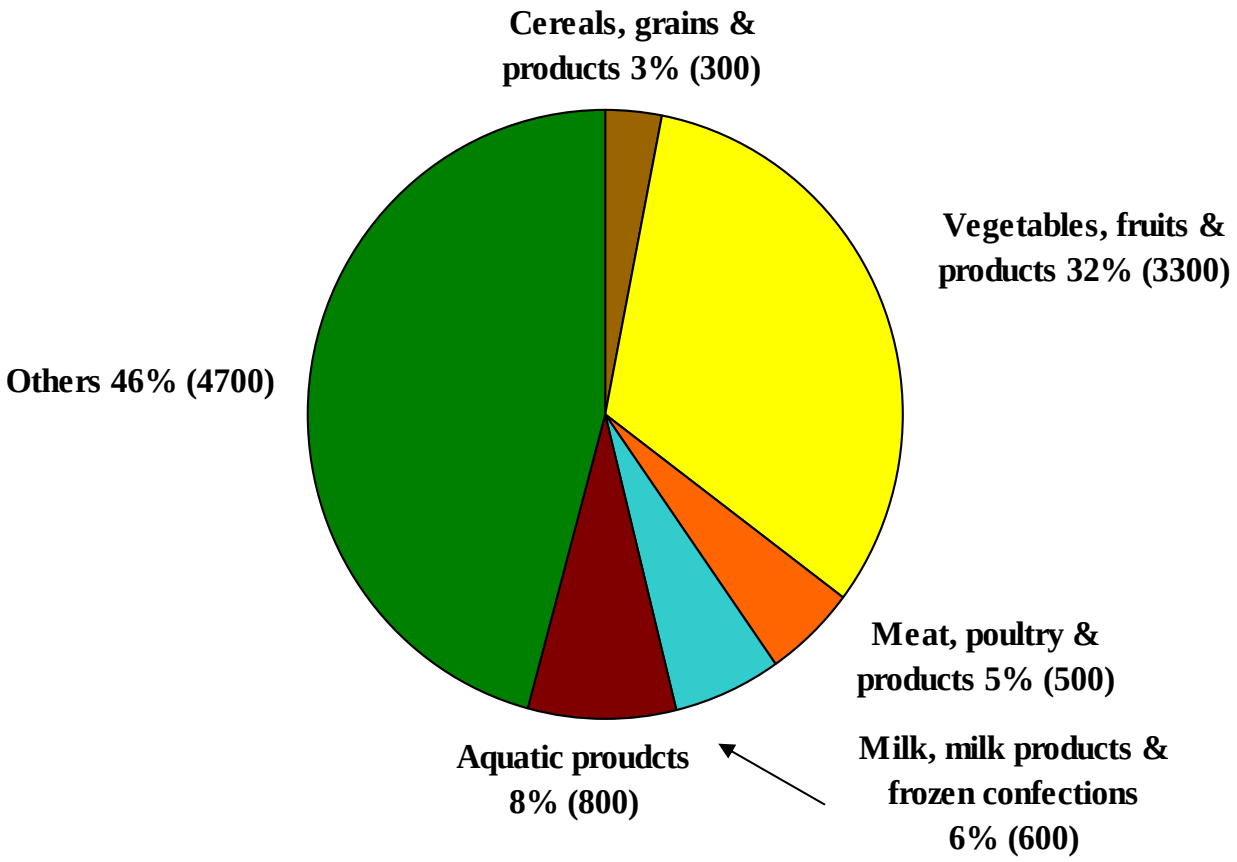
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- The CFS releases the “Food Safety Report” every month so as to allow the public to obtain the latest food safety information timely. Besides, the CFS has released the results of a targeted food surveillance project “Microbiological Quality of Chinese Cold Dishes” recently.

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

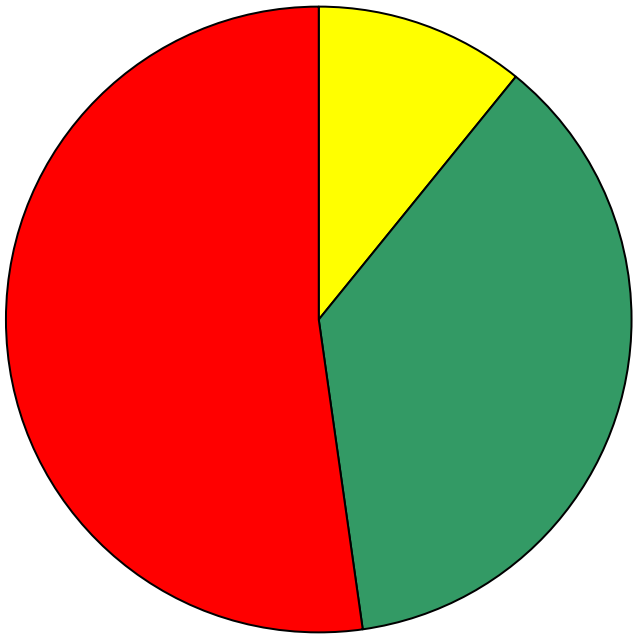
Types of food tested

- About 10300 food samples of various food groups were tested.



N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded and may not add up to total due to rounding.

Types of testing

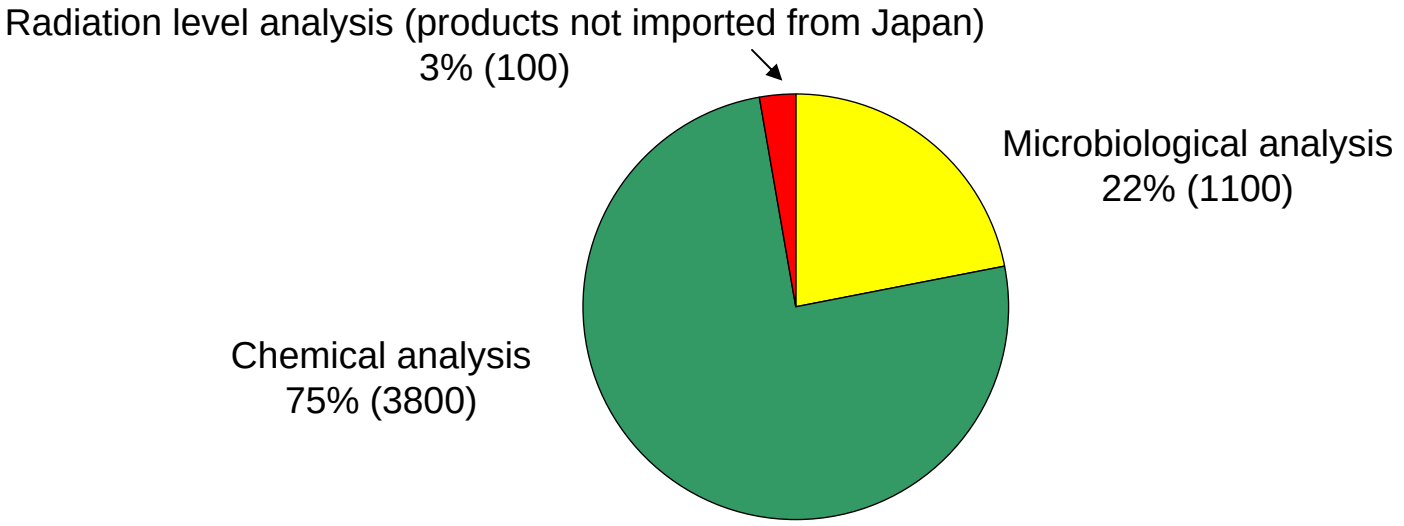


N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded and may not add up to total due to rounding.

Types of testing (Cont'd)

- In view of an incident involving a nuclear power plant in Japan after an earthquake, the CFS has stepped up surveillance of fresh produce imported from Japan for examination of radiation level from mid March. In August, all the radiation level test results of about 5200 samples were satisfactory.

- Except that, types of testing for the remaining food surveillance samples are distributed as follows:



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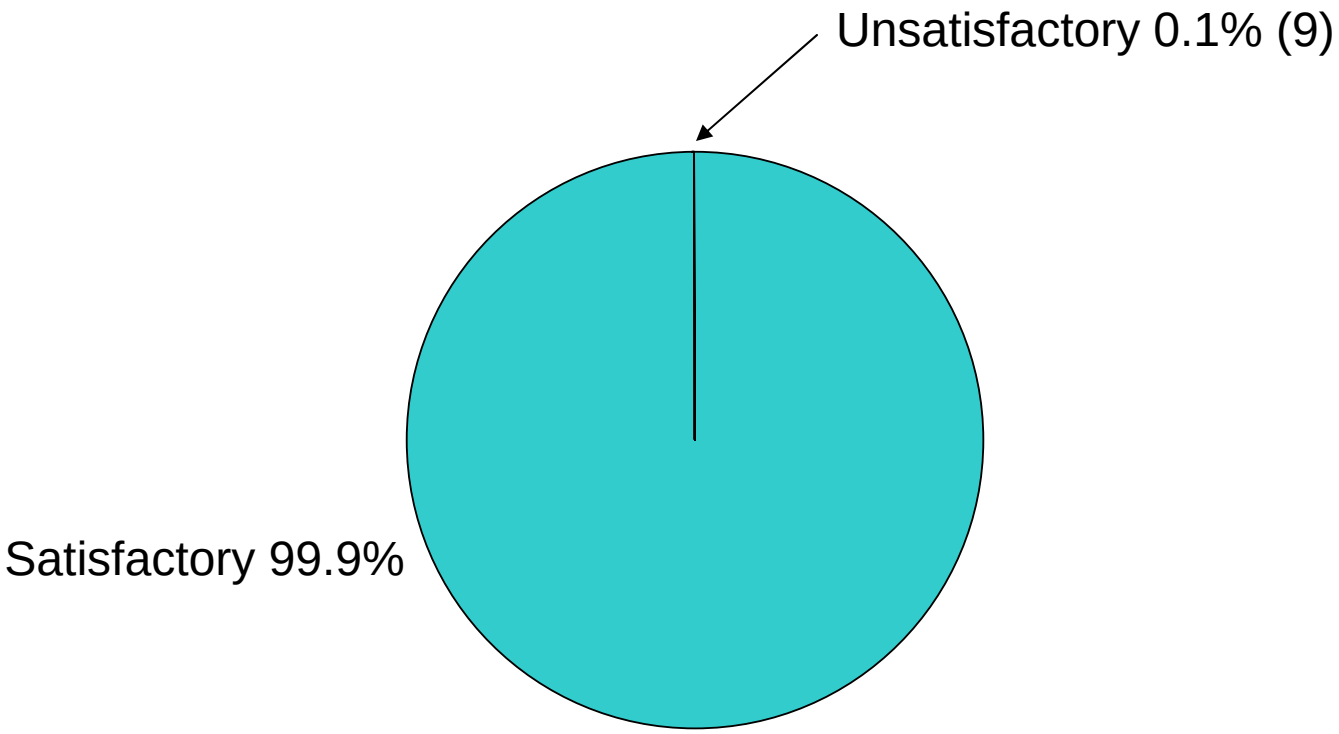
Overall results

- There were 9 unsatisfactory samples in total. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%.



Unsatisfactory samples

- 9 unsatisfactory food samples included 4 previously announced results. The remaining 5 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	*No. of Samples Tested*	*No. of Unsatisfactory Samples*
Vegetables, fruits & products	3300	0
Meat, poultry & products	500	1
Aquatic products	800	3
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	600	0
Cereal, grains & products	300	0
Others	4700	1
Total	***10300***	***5***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 3300 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

- All 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 Chinese preserved meat, sausage and ham.

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

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





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

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Pork ball	Sorbic acid	160 ppm (1)

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

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

Other tests

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

3. Aquatic products

- About 800 samples were collected. They generally covered fish, shellfish, shrimp/prawn, crab, squid and their products.

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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%, with 3 unsatisfactory samples in this report.




3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Noodlefish	Formaldehyde	890 ppm(1)

(1) Formaldehyde is not permitted in food. Occasional consumption of the noodlefish with the detected level will not cause adverse health. However, high consumption may possibly result in abdominal pain, vomiting and kidney problems.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Metallic contamination

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Frozen *Kihadamaguro Otoro* (Fish)	Mercury	1.97 ppm (1)
Frozen ling fillets	Mercury	1.01 ppm (1)

(1) The detected level exceeded the legal limit (0.5 ppm). Occasional consumption will not cause adverse health effect, but consumption on a long-term basis may affect the nervous system.

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Other tests

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

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 600 samples 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.

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5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 300 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 4700 food samples were collected. Types included:

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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%. Except for the previously announced 1 sliced boiled pork with jellyfish (found to have a pathogen, *Salmonella*) and 3 samples with unsatisfactory plasticiser levels, there was 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Microbiological analysis

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Samples	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Rice with BBQ pork	*Staphylococcus aureus*	23000/g (1)

(1) Intake of food with excessive amount of *Staphylococcus aureus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Test results of plasticisers

- In view of the plasticiser contamination incident in Taiwan, samples of Taiwan food and drinks have been collected from the local market to test for di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate (DEHP), di-isononyl phthalate (DINP), and di-butyl phthalate (DBP).

- In August 2011, 219 samples finished the test. In which, results for 3 samples were unsatisfactory and all have been announced.

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

- *Staphylococcus aureus* is commonly present in human skin, hair and nasal cavity. Large quantities of such bacteria in food items indicates that contamination due to poor personal hygiene of the food handlers has likely taken place. Food handlers should always observe good personal hygiene and wash their hands properly before handling food. If there is a wound in the hand, cover it properly with a waterproof bandage or wear a glove before handling food.

- 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.

Advice to consumers

- Fish contain many essential nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids and high quality proteins. Moderate consumption of a variety of fish is recommended. Pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children are more susceptible to the effects of mercury. When choosing food, they should avoid eating large predatory fish.

- Consumers should patronise licensed restaurants and reliable retailers. They should take a balanced diet so as to avoid excessive intake of food additives from a small range of food items.