Food Safety Report for November 2011

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

December 2011

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

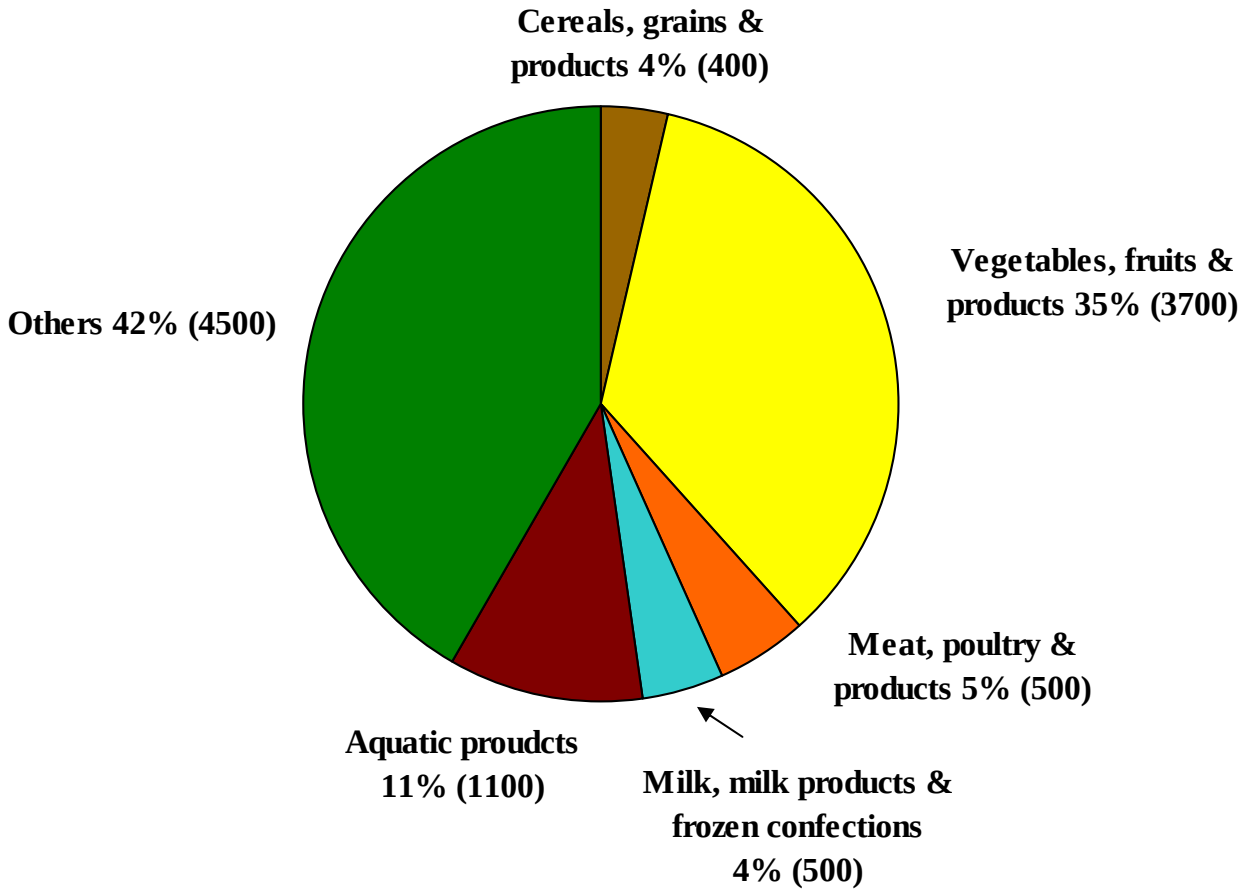
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- 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 seasonal food surveillance report on “Poon Choi” recently.

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

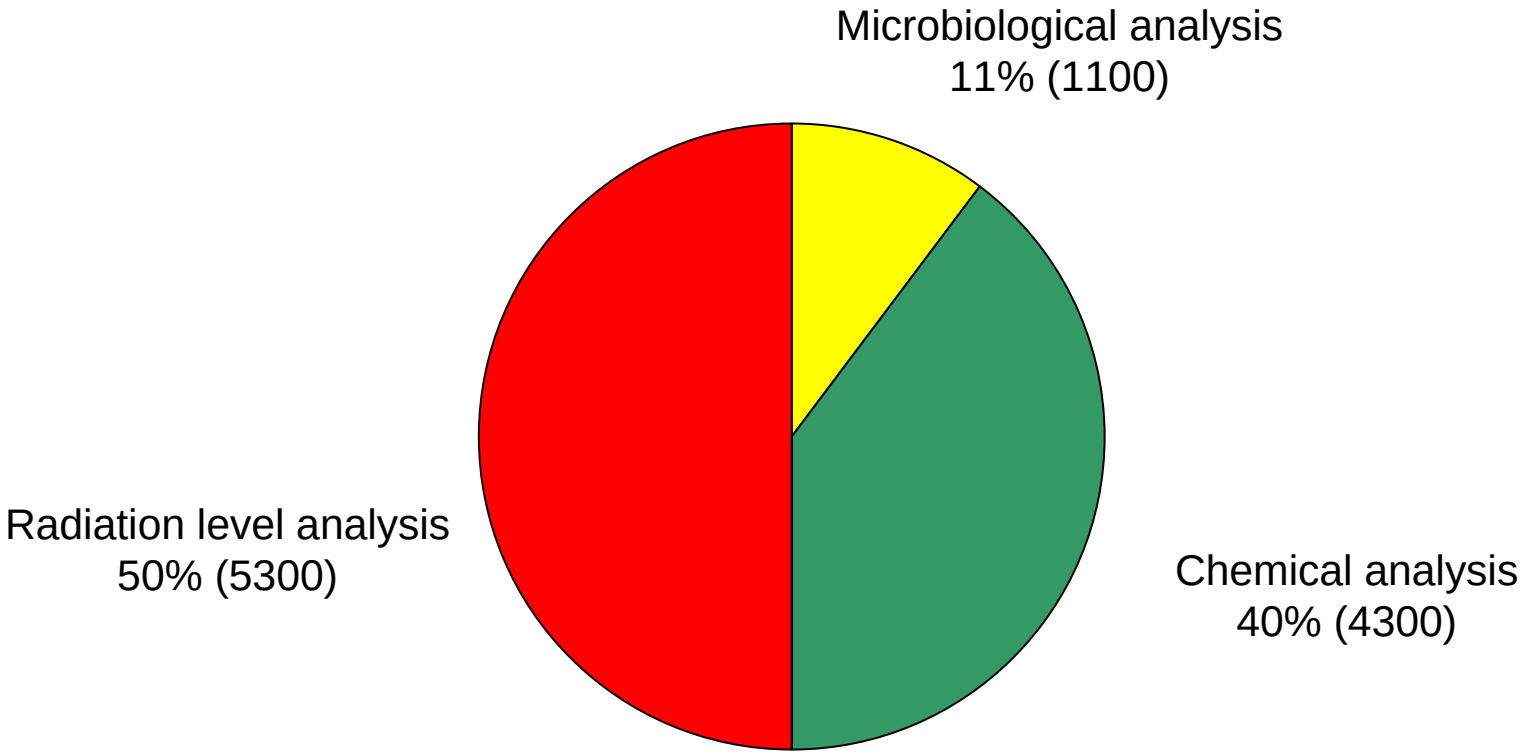
Types of food tested

- About 10700 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

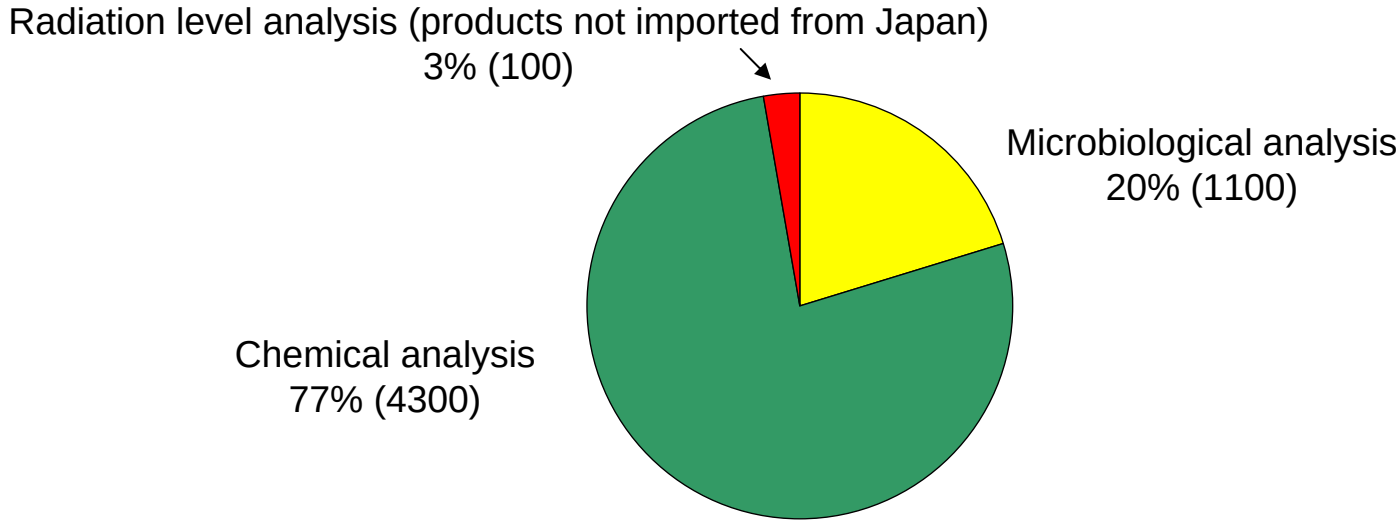


N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded and may not add up to total due to rounding.

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 November, 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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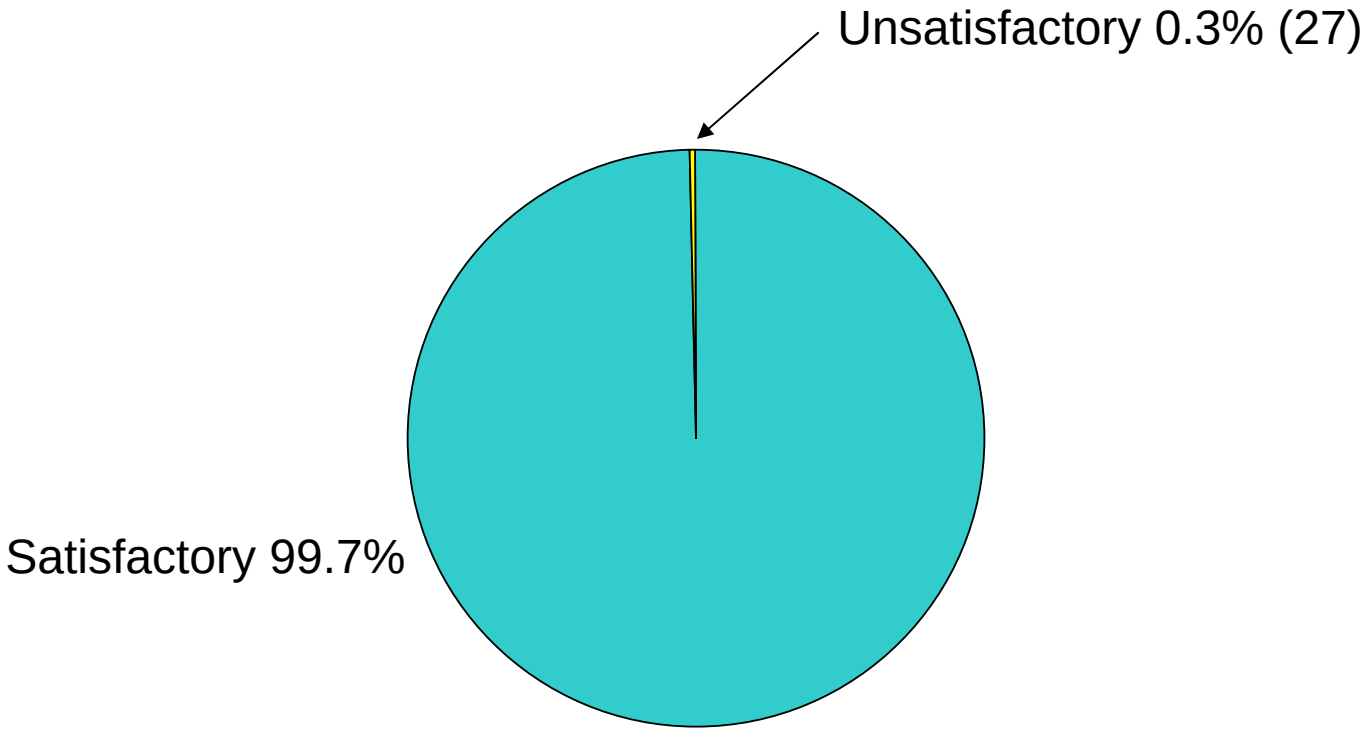
Overall results

- There were 27 unsatisfactory samples in total. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%.



Unsatisfactory samples

- The 27 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	***No. of Samples Tested***	***No. of Unsatisfactory Samples***
Vegetables, fruits & products	3700	5
Meat, poultry & products	500	2
Aquatic products	1100	2
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	500	16
Cereal, grains & products	400	0
Others	4500	2
Total	***10700***	***27***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 3700 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
    - Metallic contamination
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%, with 5 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Pesticides

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Chinese flowering cabbage	Carbofuran	2.3 ppm (1)

(1) Consumption of the concerned vegetable may affect the nervous system.

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

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Dried raisins	Sulphur dioxide	3110 ppm (1)

(1) The level exceeded the legal limit (1500 ppm). Sulphur dioxide is of low toxicity and it is unlikely that the dried raisins with this detected level would pose any adverse health effect to consumers upon normal consumption. However, for individuals who are allergic to this preservative, there may be symptoms of breathing difficulty, headache and nausea.

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

Metallic contamination

- 3 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Asparagus	Cadmium	0.19 ppm (1)
Chinese flowering cabbage	Cadmium	0.14 ppm (1)
Cabbage	Cadmium	0.18 ppm (1)

(1) The levels exceeded the legal limit (0.1 ppm). Upon normal consumption, it is unlikely that the above vegetables with cadmium at the detected levels would pose any adverse health effect to consumers.

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

Other tests

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

- 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
2 fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	1400 & 1600 ppm (1)

(1) Sulphur dioxide is not permitted in fresh, chilled and frozen meat. It is of low toxicity and it is unlikely that it would pose any adverse health effect to consumers upon normal consumption. However, for individuals who are allergic to this preservative, there may be symptoms of breathing difficulty, headache and nausea.

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 1100 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 99.8%, with 2 unsatisfactory samples in this report.




3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Biotoxins

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
2 geoducks	Paralytic shellfish poisoning toxin	93 & 131 µg/100g(1)

(1) Paralytic shellfish poisoning toxin may cause neurological symptoms such as numbness of extremities and mouth

3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Other tests

- The remaining samples for other tests (e.g. pathogens, preservatives, metallic contamination, veterinary drug residues and colouring matters) 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, pathogens e.g. *Salmonella* and *Staphylococcus aureus*)
  - Chemical tests (e.g. melamine, veterinary drug residues, colouring matters and sweeteners)
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 96.6%, with 16 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Microbiological examination

- 16 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 whipping cream #	Total bacterial count	60000/g* (1)
10 full cream milk #	Total bacterial count	38000 – $3x10^7$/g* (1)
4 reduced fat milk beverage #	Total bacterial count	$2x10^7$ – $3.7x10^7$/g* (1)
1 skimmed milk beverage	Colony count	>10* (1)

Products belonged to the same brand.

(1) Total bacterial count and colony count are hygienic indicators. The detected levels exceeded the legal limit.

* The affected batch of products were marked and sealed by the CFS. None of them have entered into the local market.

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

Other tests

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

5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 400 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 4500 food samples were collected. Types included:

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

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%, with 2 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Pathogens

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Samples	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Tunip pudding	*Clostridium perfringens*	28000/g (1)

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

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Steak and chop sauce	Benzoic acid and sorbic acid	780 ppm and 630 ppm (1)

(1) The total level of the two preservatives detected exceeded the legal limit (1000 ppm). Benzoic acid and sorbic acid are of low toxicity and it is unlikely that it would pose any adverse health effect to consumers upon normal consumption.

Follow-up actions

- Trace source of food items in question.
- Request the vendors concerned to stop sale and dispose of incriminated food items.
- Issue warning letters to the vendors concerned.
- 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.
- Importers should source milk products from reliable food manufacturer. Manufacturers should ensure that the process of producing milk products is hygienic, including proper disinfection of the equipment. They should also pay attention to temperature control during transportation.
- Retailers should source food from reliable suppliers. Maintain a good recording system to allow source tracing if needed.
- The Food Safety Ordinance which introduces a food tracing mechanism is now effective. Upon the expiry of the grace period by 31 January 2012, any person who does not register but carries on a food importation or distribution business; or fails to comply with the record-keeping requirement commits an offence.

Advice to consumers

- Take the following measures in order to reduce the pesticide residues:
  - Wash and soak the vegetables thoroughly.
  - Blanch vegetables in boiling water for one minute and discard the water used for blanching.
  - Remove the outer leaves and peel the vegetables.
- Thorough washing and soaking of vegetables can remove cadmium adhered to their surface.
- Since sulphur dioxide is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing, soaking and cooking.
- Patronize licensed restaurants and reliable retailers.
- Take a balanced diet so as to avoid excessive intake of certain harmful substances as a result of frequent consumption of a small range of food items.