Food Safety Report for April 2012

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

May 2012

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

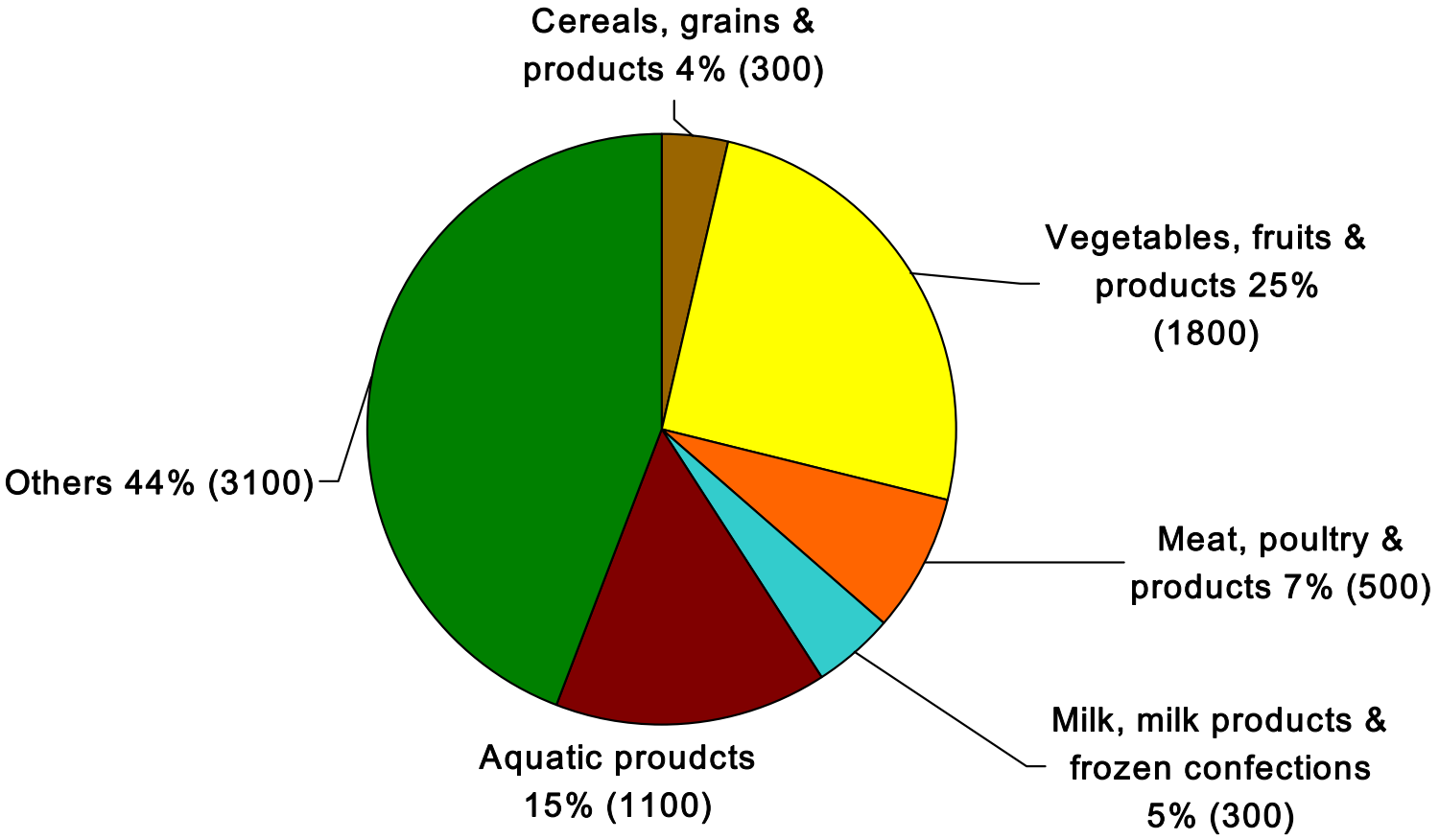
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- 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 April 2012.

Types of food tested

- About 7100 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.

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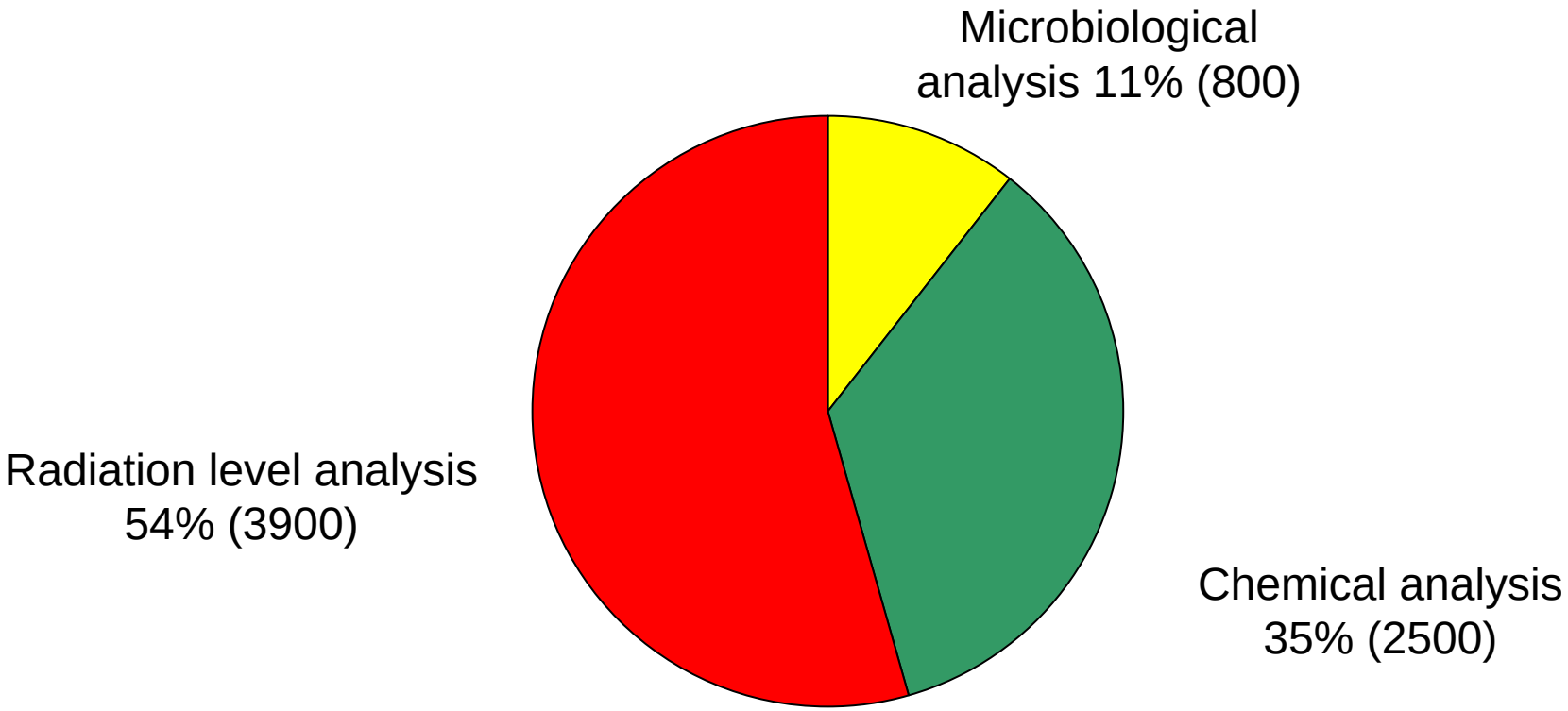
Types of testing



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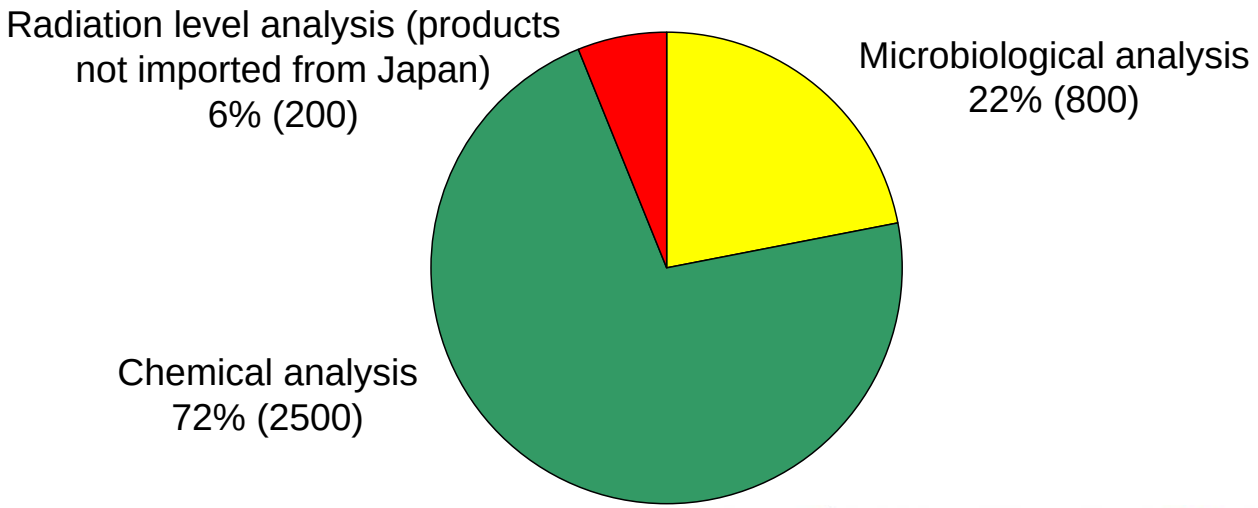
Types of testing (Cont'd)

- In response to the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in Japan, CFS has stepped up surveillance of imported Japanese food for testing of radiation level from mid-March 2011. In April 2012, all the radiation level test results of about 3700 samples were satisfactory.

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



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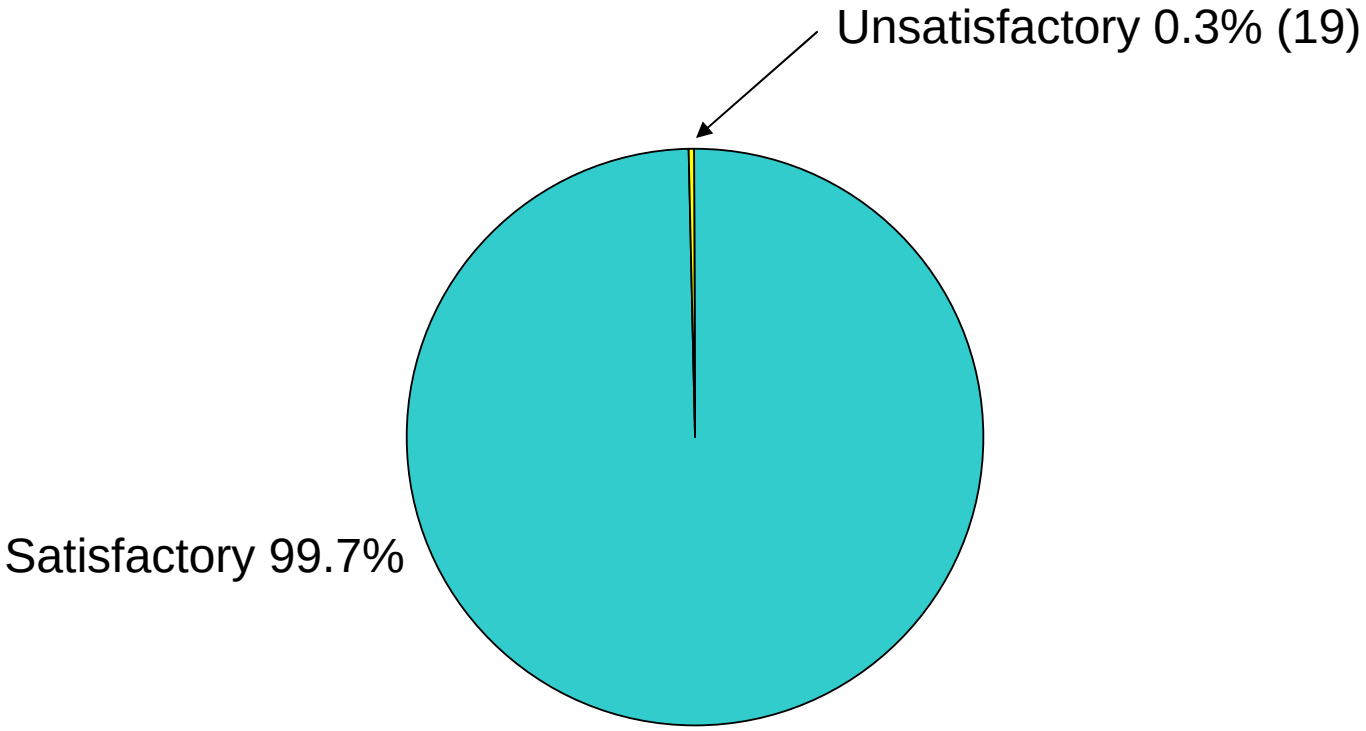
Overall results

- There were 19 unsatisfactory samples. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%.



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Unsatisfactory samples

- 19 unsatisfactory food samples included 9 previously announced results. The remaining 10 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

Food Group	***No. of Samples Tested***	***No. of Unsatisfactory Samples***
Vegetables, fruits & products	1800	3
Meat, poultry & products	500	1
Aquatic products	1100	1
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	300	5
Cereal, grains & products	300	0
Others	3100	0
Total	***7100***	***10***

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

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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
    - Metallic contamination
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8 %, with 3 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Metallic contamination

- 3 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Baby spinach	Cadmium	0.17 ppm (1)
Fresh mushroom	Cadmium	0.46 ppm (1)
Chinese lettuce	Cadmium	0.15 ppm (1)

(1) The level 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. Thorough washing and soaking of vegetables will remove some cadmium attached on their surfaces.

Other tests

- The remaining samples for other tests (e.g. pathogens, pesticides and preservatives) were satisfactory.

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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 98.7%. Except for the previously announced unsatisfactory samples of 6 fresh beef (contained a preservative, sulphur dioxide), 1 unsatisfactory sample is included in this report.

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

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	21 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.

Other tests

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

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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 and veterinary drug residues)
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.

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3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

Preservatives

- 1 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 raw oyster	Cadmium	3.5 ppm [1]

[1] The level exceeded the legal limit (2 ppm). Based on the detected level, long-term consumption of raw oyster with the same level of cadmium may affect the kidney.

Other tests

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

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4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 300 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, preservatives, veterinary drug residues and colouring matters)
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 98.4%, with 5 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Microbiological tests:

- 5 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
5 frozen confection samples #	Total bacterial count	57000/g – 72000/g (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

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g. pathogens, melamine, preservatives, veterinary drug residues and colouring matters) 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, pathogens)
  - Radiation level tests

- All samples were satisfactory.

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6. Other food commodities

- About 3100 food samples were collected. Types included:

Mixed dishes ▫ Pathogens and preservatives	Condiments and sauces ▫ Preservatives and colouring matters
Dim Sum ▫ Pathogens , preservatives 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 ▫ Preservatives, colouring matters and metallic contamination	

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%. Except for the 3 previously announced unsatisfactory samples (1 satay sauce, 1 balsamic vinaigrette and 1 sport drink) containing plasticizers, the remaining were satisfactory.

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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.

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Advice for trade

- 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 frozen confections from reliable food manufacturer. Manufacturers should ensure that the process of producing frozen confections is hygienic, including proper disinfection of the equipment. They should also pay attention to temperature control during transportation.

- The trade should maintain a good recording system in accordance with the Food Safety Ordinance to allow source tracing if needed.

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Advice for consumers

- Fruit and vegetables are important components of a healthy diet as they are good sources of dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals. Vegetables should be soaked and washed thoroughly before consumption to remove some cadmium attached on the surface.
- Do not buy or consume meat which is unnaturally red.
- Since sulphur dioxide is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing, soaking and cooking.
- 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.

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