Food Safety Report for May 2012

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

June 2012

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

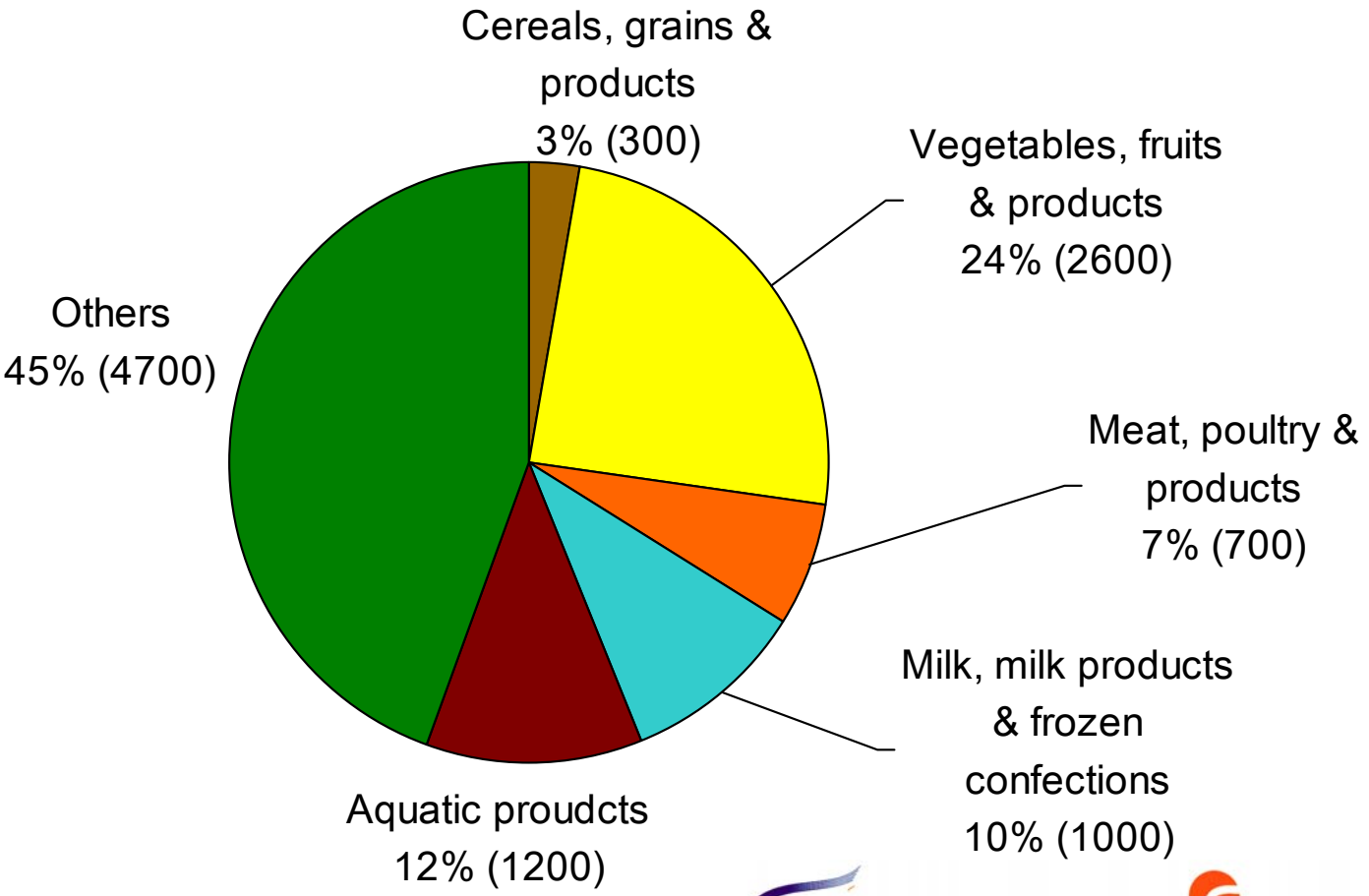
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- 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 May 2012.

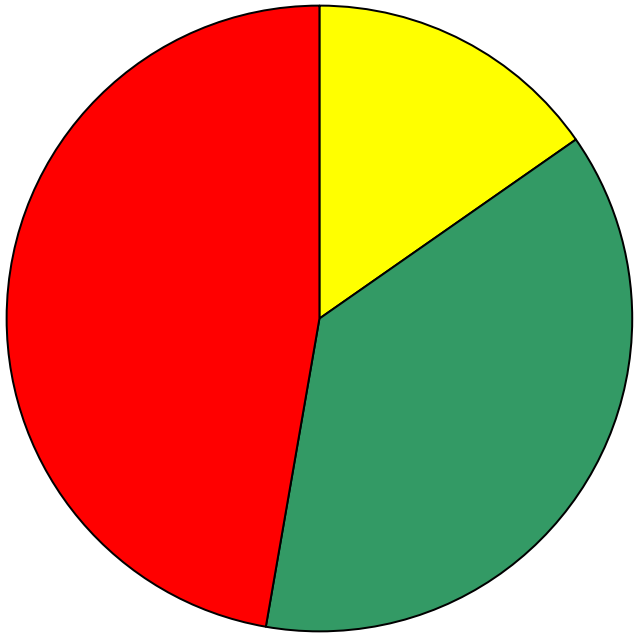
Types of food tested

- About 10500 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



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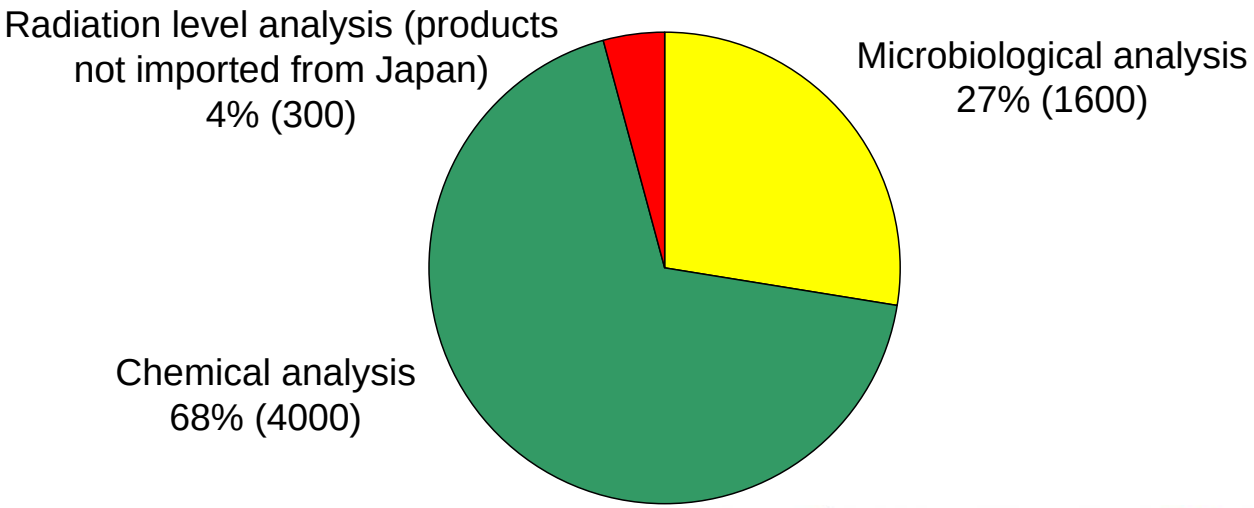
Types of testing (Cont'd)

- 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 May 2012, all the radiation level test results of about 4700 samples were satisfactory.

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



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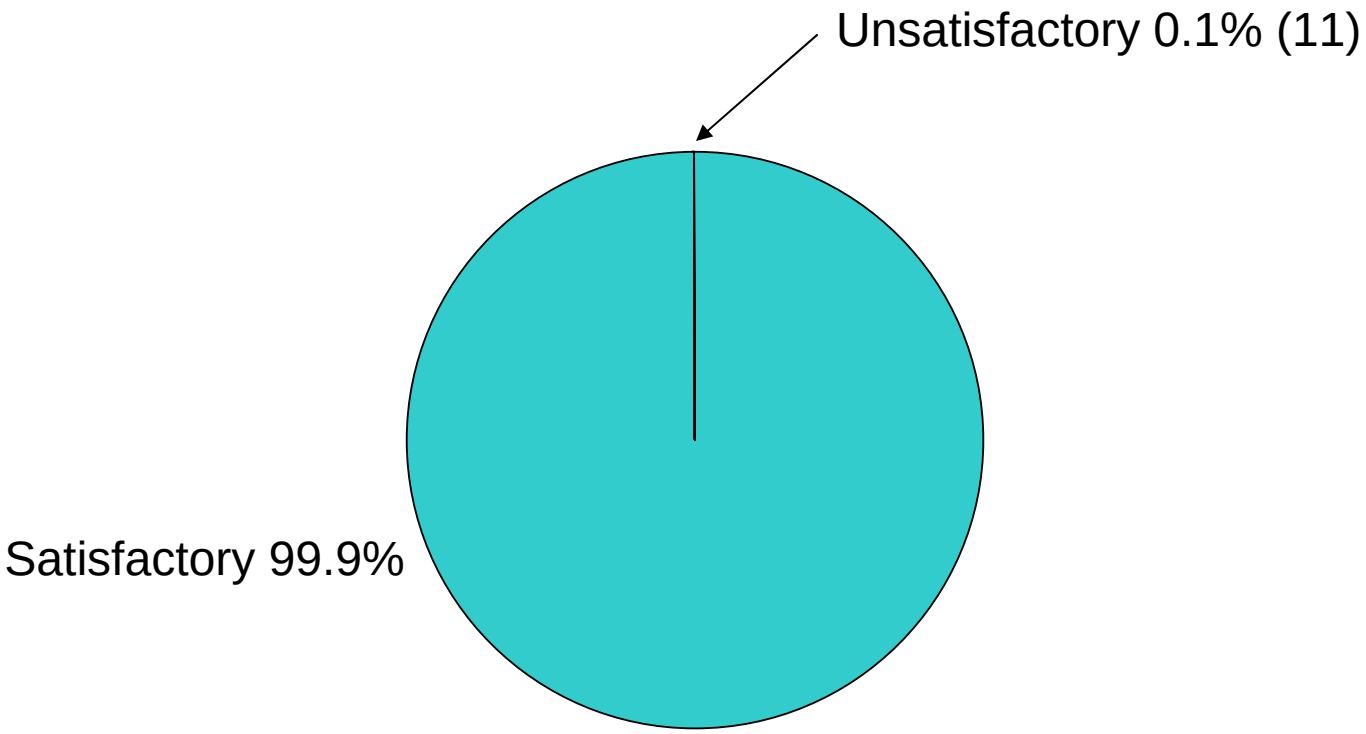
Overall results

- There were 11 unsatisfactory samples. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%.



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Unsatisfactory samples

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

Food Group	*No. of Samples Tested*	*No. of Unsatisfactory Samples*
Vegetables, fruits & products	2600	4
Meat, poultry & products	700	0
Aquatic products	1200	1
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	1000	3
Cereal, grains & products	300	0
Others	4700	0
Total	***10500***	***8***

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 2600 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)
    - Metallic contamination
    - Preservatives
  - Radiation level tests

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.8 %, with 4 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Metallic contamination

- 4 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Dried winter mushroom	Cadmium	3.15 ppm (1)
Onion	Cadmium	0.16 ppm (1)
Chinese amaranth	Cadmium	0.17 ppm (1)
Baby spinach	Cadmium	0.29 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.

2. Meat, poultry & products

- About 700 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%. Apart from the previously announced unsatisfactory samples of 3 fresh meat (contained a preservative, sulphur dioxide), remained samples for other tests were all satisfactory.





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3. Aquatic products

- About 1200 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
Tuna sashimi	Mercury	3.6 ppm (1)

(1) The 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.

Other tests

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

4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 1000 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 99.7%, with 3 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

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

Microbiological tests:

- 3 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
2 frozen confections #	Total bacterial count	170000/g – 320000/g (1)
1 frozen confection	Coliform organisms	300/g (1)

\# Products belonged to the same brand.

(1) Total bacterial count and coliform organisms are hygienic indicators. The detected levels exceeded the legal limit of 50000/g and 100/g respectively.

Other tests

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

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.




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 , 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	

- All samples were satisfactory.

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 for trade

- Manufacturers of frozen confections 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.

- Retailers of frozen confections, particularly those which sells scoop and soft ice-cream should:
  - Discard the defrosted products and do not re-freeze melted frozen confection for sale
  - Drain off and discard the leftover of frozen confection daily
  - Maintain all equipment and utensils in clean and good condition
  - Observe hygienic practice during all preparation and handling process

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

Advice to the 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 cadmium attached on the surface.

- 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 the susceptible groups being affected by 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 contaminants from a small range of food items.