Food Safety Report for July 2012

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

August 2012

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

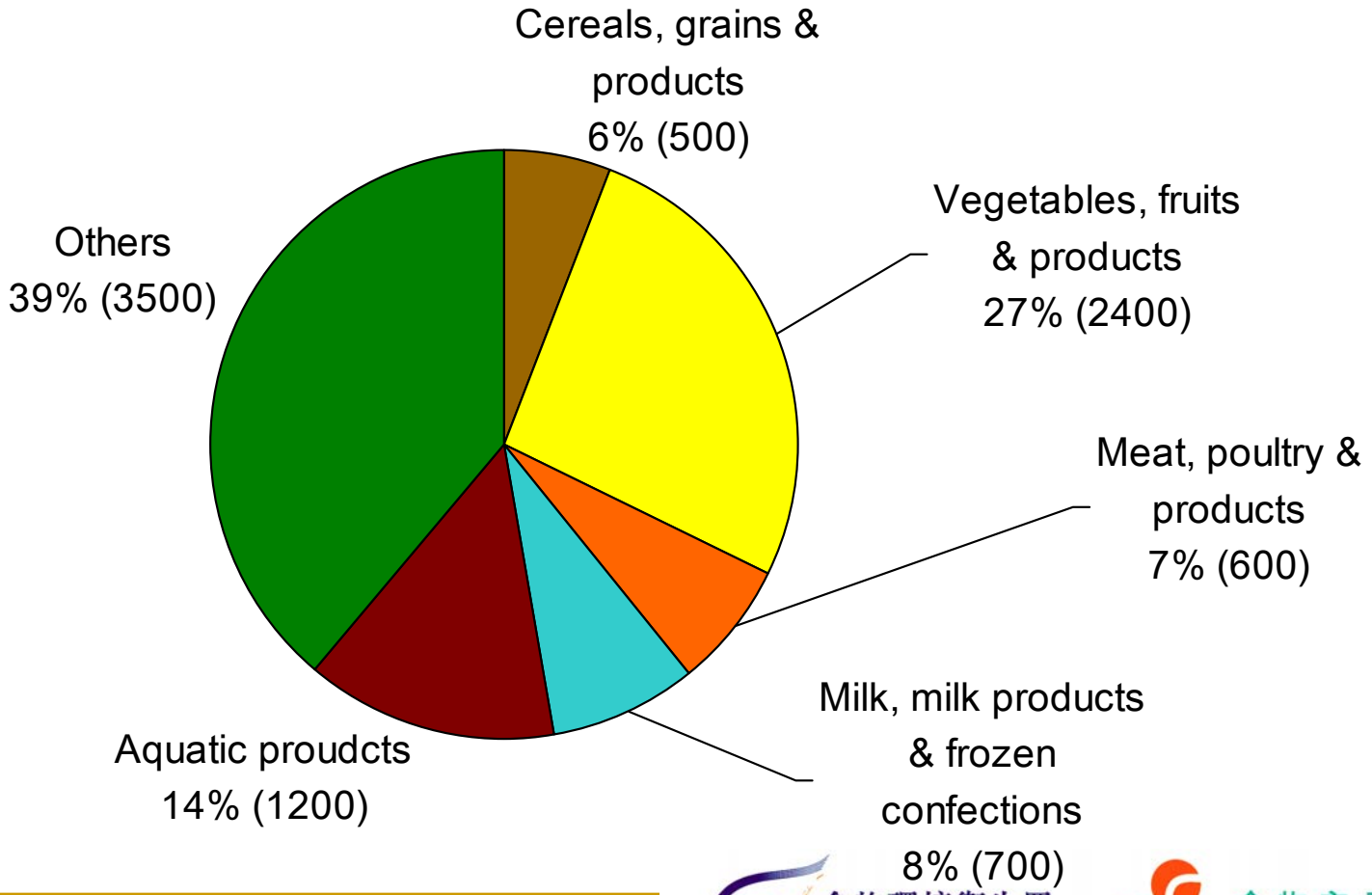
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- 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 July 2012.

Types of food tested

- About 9000 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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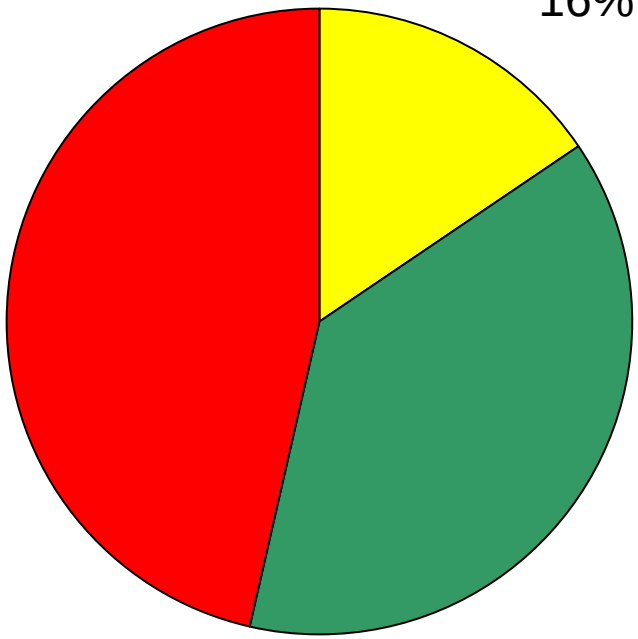
Types of testing



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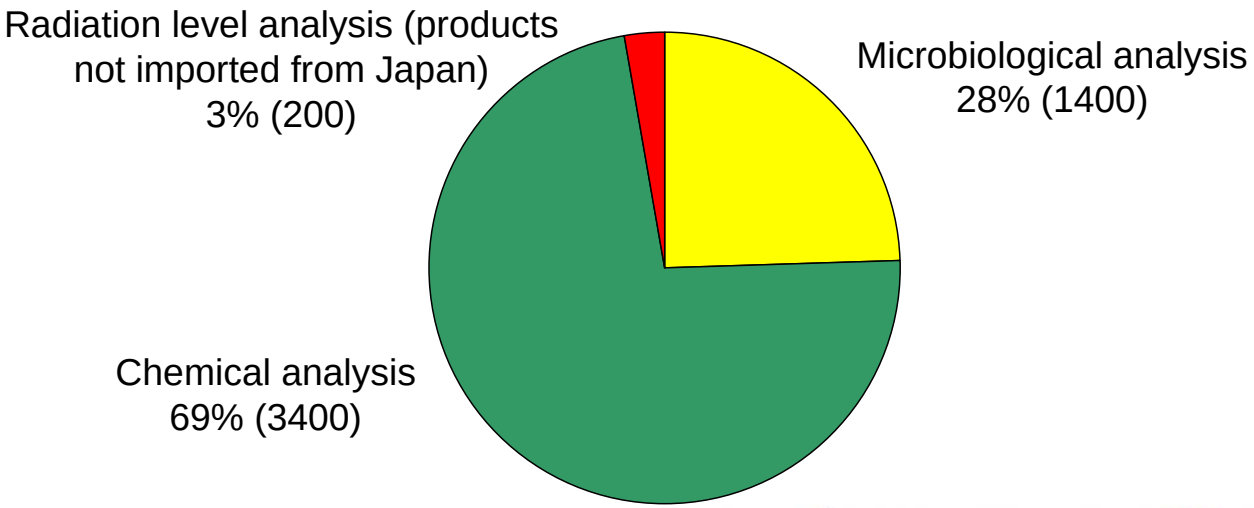
Types of testing (Cont'd)

- 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 July 2012, all the radiation level test results of about 4000 samples were satisfactory.

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



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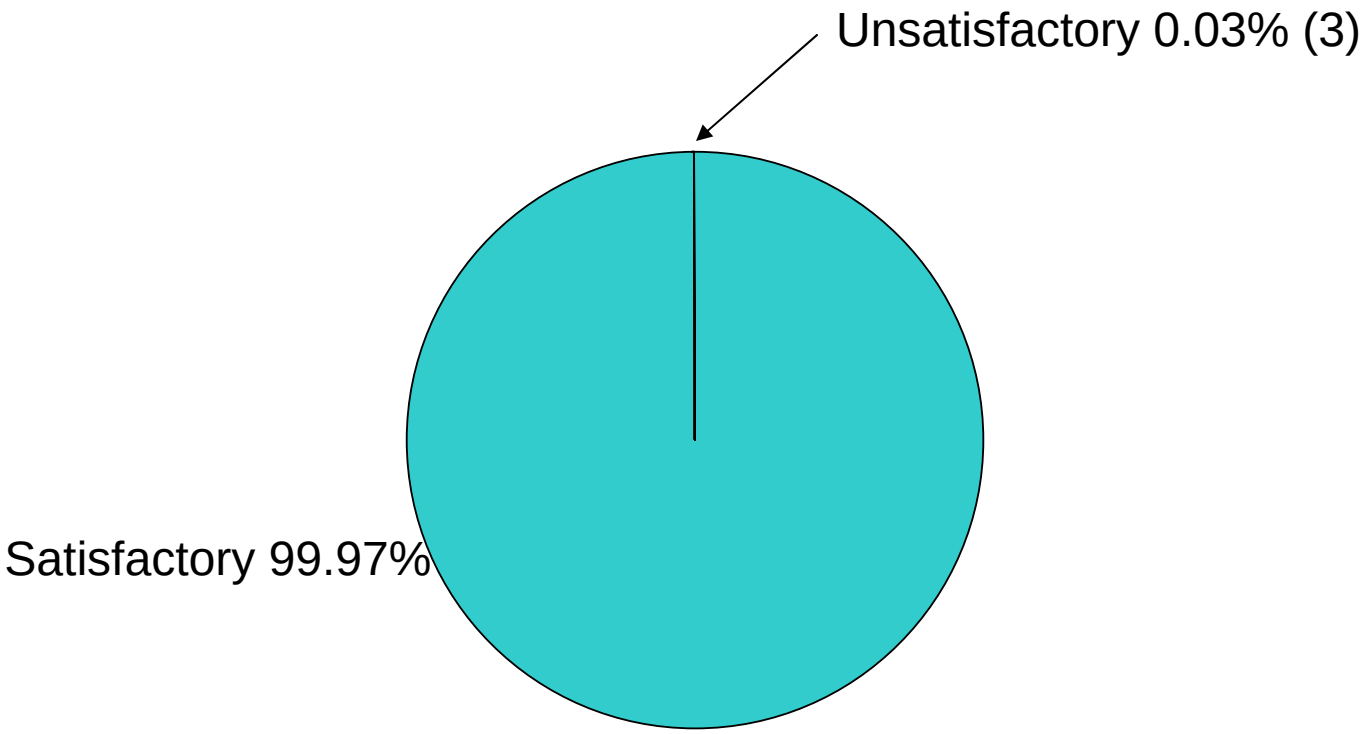
Overall results

- There were 3 unsatisfactory samples. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.97%.



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Unsatisfactory samples

- 3 unsatisfactory food samples were:

Food Group	*No. of Samples Tested*	*No. of Unsatisfactory Samples*
Vegetables, fruits & products	**2400**	**0**
Meat, poultry & products	**600**	**1**
Aquatic products	**1200**	**1**
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	**700**	**0**
Cereal, grains & products	**500**	**0**
Others	**3500**	**1**
Total	**9000**	**3**

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 2400 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

- All samples were satisfactory.

2. Meat, poultry & products

- About 600 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 99.8%, with 1 unsatisfactory samples in this report.





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

Preservatives:

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	660 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.

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, toxins 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)

Chemical test

- 1 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Frozen tuna fillet	Mercury	2.18 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 700 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

- All samples were satisfactory.

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5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 500 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 3500 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%, with 1 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Tests for Preservatives:

- 1 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
Fried fritter	Boric acid	330 ppm (1)

(1) Not permitted in food, but the detected levels were unlikely to pose adverse health effects upon normal consumption.

Other tests

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

- Comply with the legal requirements and do not use sulphur dioxide in fresh, chilled or frozen meat.
- Follow “good manufacturing practice” (GMP) and use permitted food additives in an appropriate manner.
- Maintain a good recording system in accordance with the Food Safety Ordinance to allow source tracing if needed.

Advice for consumers

- Purchase meat and food from reliable market stalls, fresh provision shops and food premises. Do not buy or consume meat which is unnaturally red.

- 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.