Food Safety Report for October 2012

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

November 2012
(Revised in Feb 2013)

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

Introduction

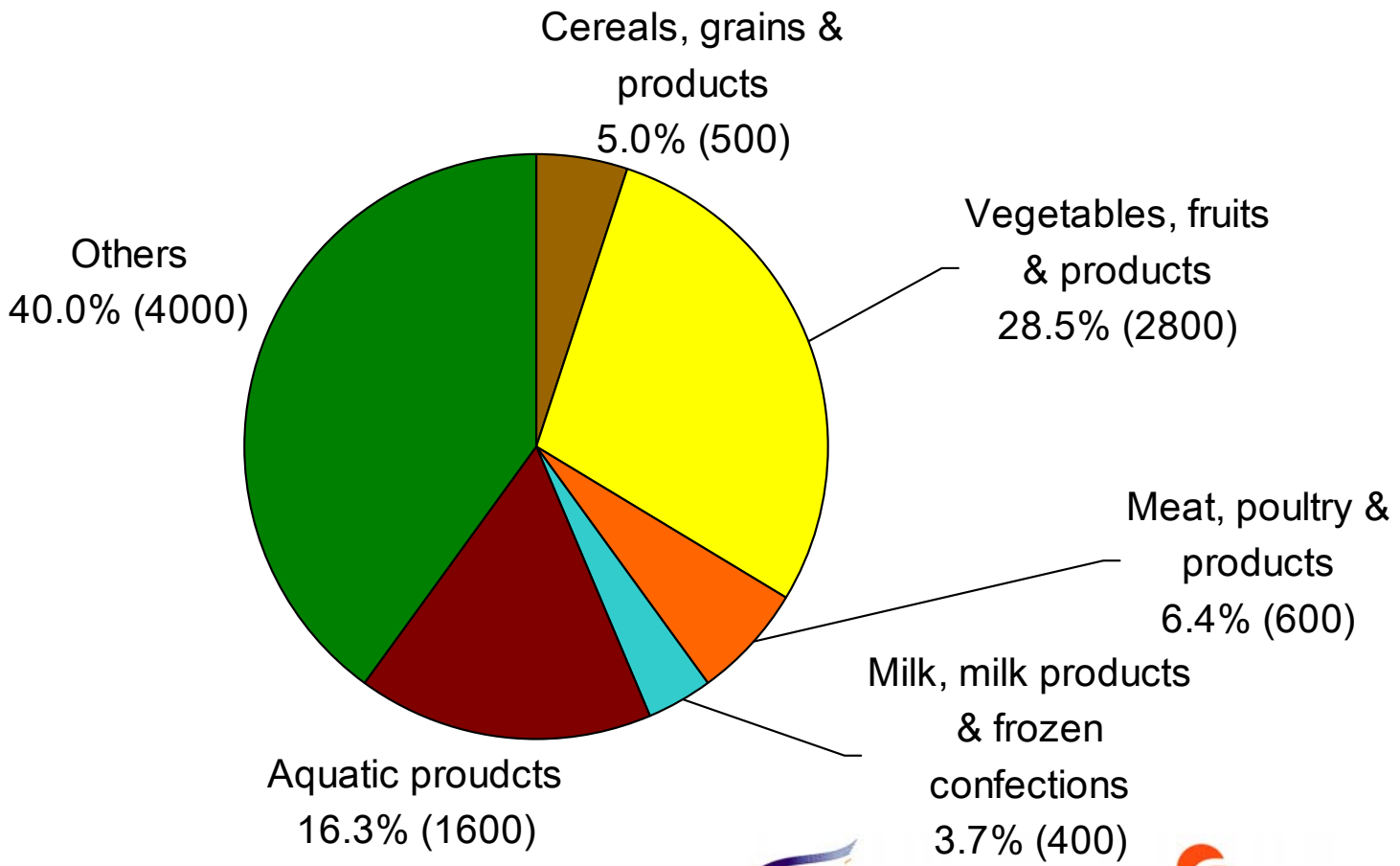
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical and radiological tests.

- 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 October 2012.

Types of food tested

- About 9900 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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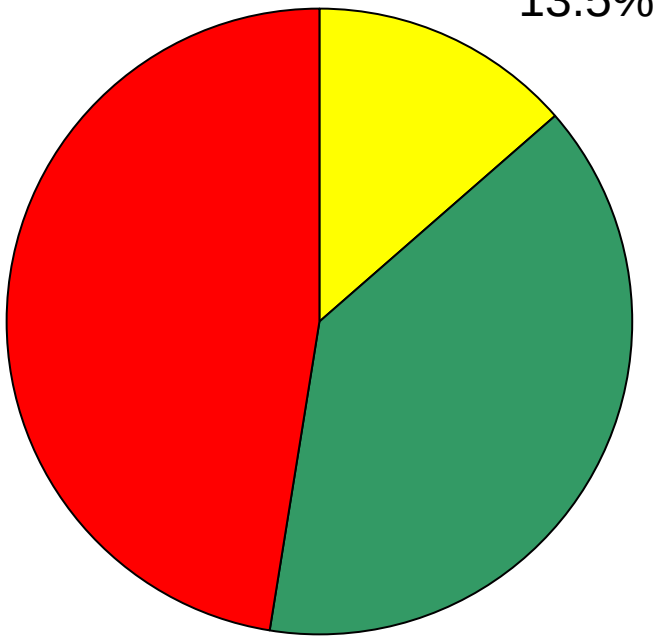
Types of testing



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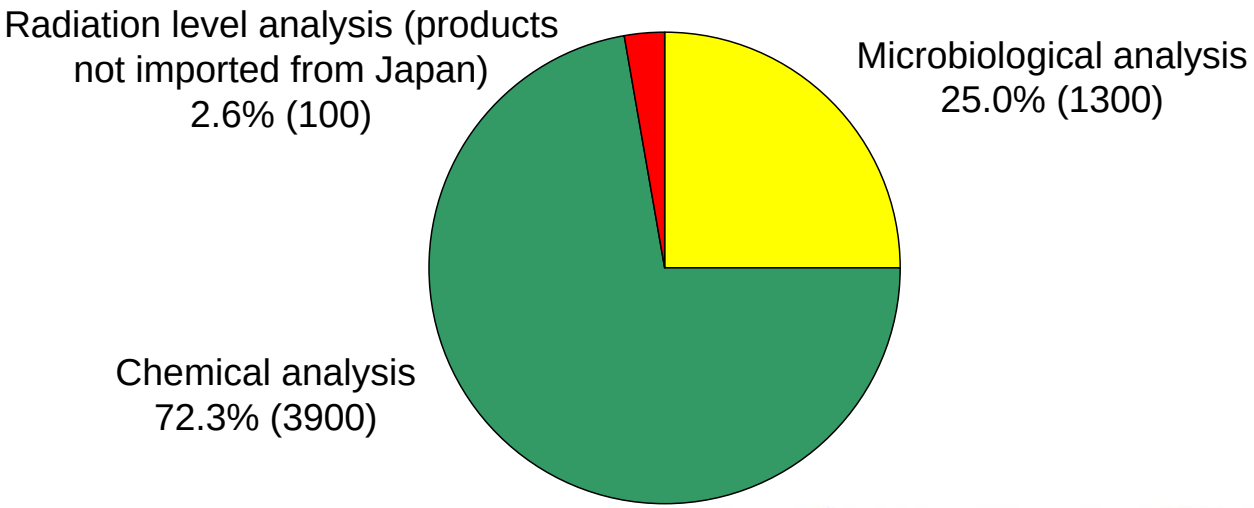
Types of testing (Cont'd)

- 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 October 2012, all the radiation level test results of about 4600 samples were satisfactory.

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



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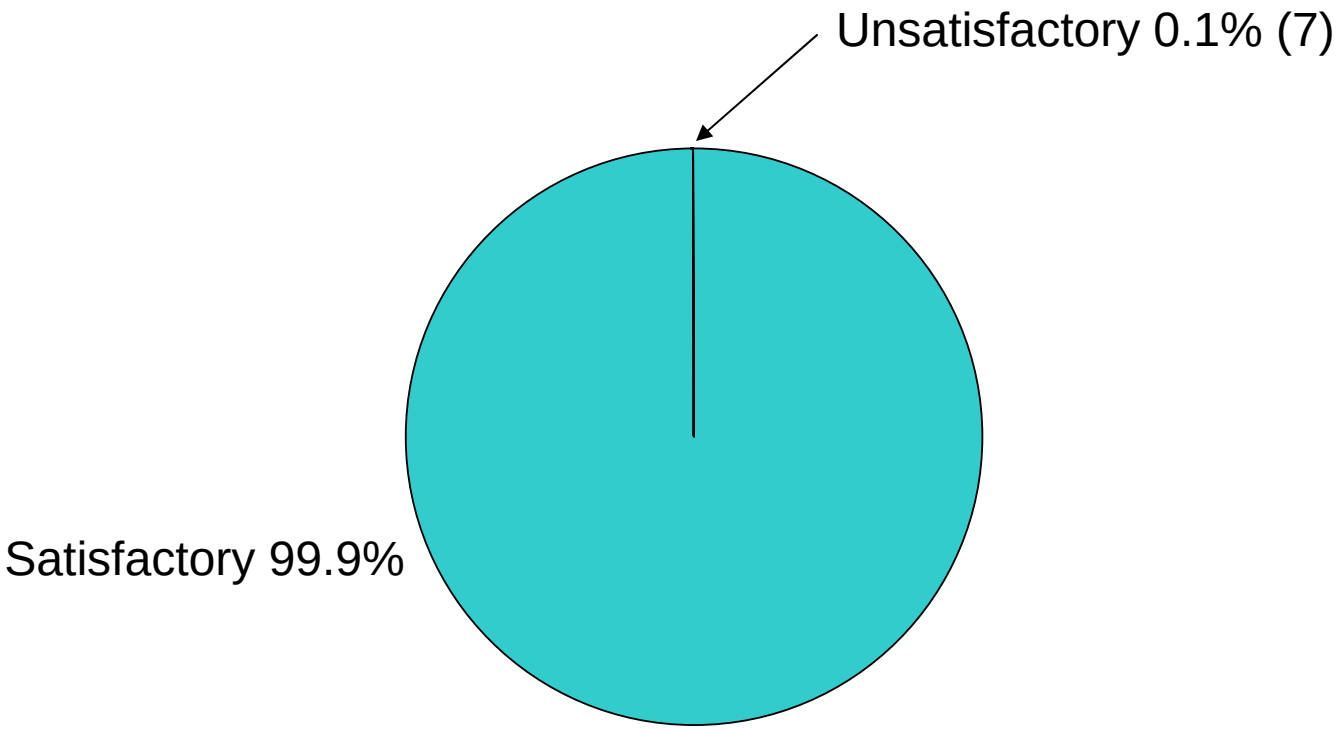
Overall results

- There were 7 unsatisfactory samples. Overall satisfactory rate was 99.9%.



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Unsatisfactory samples

- 7 unsatisfactory food samples are as follows :

Food Group	*No. of Samples Tested*	*No. of Unsatisfactory Samples*
Vegetables, fruits & products	**2800**	**1**
Meat, poultry & products	**600**	**5**
Aquatic products	**1600**	**0**
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	**400**	**0**
Cereal, grains & products	**500**	**0**
Others	**4000**	**1**
Total	**9900**	**7**

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

1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 2800 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 99.96%, with 1 unsatisfactory sample in this report.

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

Microbiological tests

- 1 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 sample of fried Chinese lettuce with preserved bean curd and shredded chili	*Bacillus cereus*	120,000/g (1)

(1) Exceeded the guideline's limit (less than 100,000 per gramme). *Bacillus cereus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g. pesticides residues, metallic contaminations and preservatives) 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 99.2%, with 5 unsatisfactory samples in this report.





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Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Preservatives

- 5 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
5 fresh beef	Sulphur dioxide	Levels ranged from 13 to 500 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 1600 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

- All samples were satisfactory.




4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 400 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 4000 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 ▫ Microbiological tests, 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 99.97%. with 1 unsatisfactory sample

6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

Microbiological tests

- 1 unsatisfactory samples:

Sample	Unsatisfactory testing item	Result
1 sample of soymilk	*Bacillus cereus*	180,000/ml (1)

(1) Exceeded the guideline's limit (less than 100,000 per ml). *Bacillus cereus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g.preservatives, metallic contaminations, 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 law and should not use sulphur dioxide in fresh, chilled or frozen meat. Under the Preservatives in Food Regulations (Cap. 132, sub. leg.), selling fresh, chilled or frozen meat containing sulphur dioxide is an offence and the maximum penalty is a fine of $50,000 and 6 months' imprisonment.

- The Food and Environmental Health Department will register demerit points against the fresh provision shop according to the “Demerit Points System” for licensed food premises. For repeated offenders, the penalty of suspension or cancellation of licence will be imposed.

- For public market stalls, tenancy may be terminated according to the current mechanism.

- Retailers should source food from reliable suppliers and maintain a good recording system in accordance with the Food Safety Ordinance to allow source tracing if needed.

Advice for consumers

- Sulphur dioxide is a food preservative of low toxicity. It is also water soluble and most of it tends to be removed through washing and cooking. For susceptible individuals who are allergic to sulphur dioxide, they may experience breathing difficulty, headaches and nausea. Based on the detected levels, adverse health effects is unlikely upon normal consumption.

- Patronize at reliable market stalls, fresh provision shops and restaurants.

- Do not buy or consume meat which is unnaturally red.