

Annual Summary of 2008 Food Surveillance Programme

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

2008 Food Surveillance Programme

- In 2008, about 66400 samples were collected from the import, wholesale and retail levels.
- Apart from the routine food surveillance which covered various food groups (e.g., vegetables and fruits, meat and poultry, aquatic products, milk and cereals), the CFS also conducted targeted, seasonal and popular food surveillance projects.

Targeted food surveillance

- Taking into consideration of the past surveillance data, both local and overseas food incidents and the risks of food, the CFS has undertaken several risk based targeted food surveillance projects to address specific foods/hazards and non-compliant situations. They include:
 - ❑ Microbiological quality of lunch boxes
 - ❑ Nitrate and nitrite in meat, meat products and cheese
 - ❑ Microbiological quality of prepackaged food that required reheating before consumption
 - ❑ Sudan dyes in eggs and egg products
 - ❑ Microbiological quality of ice-cream
 - ❑ Sulphur dioxide in meat
 - ❑ Bacillus cereus in fermented bean curds
 - ❑ Formaldehyde in noodlefish

Seasonal food surveillance

- The CFS continued its surveillance on festive food to assess the safety of foods which are especially popular during the seasons and festivals. The projects include:
 - ❑ Chinese New Year Food
 - ❑ Rice Dumplings
 - ❑ Mooncakes
 - ❑ Hairy Crabs
 - ❑ Buffet Food and Poon Choi

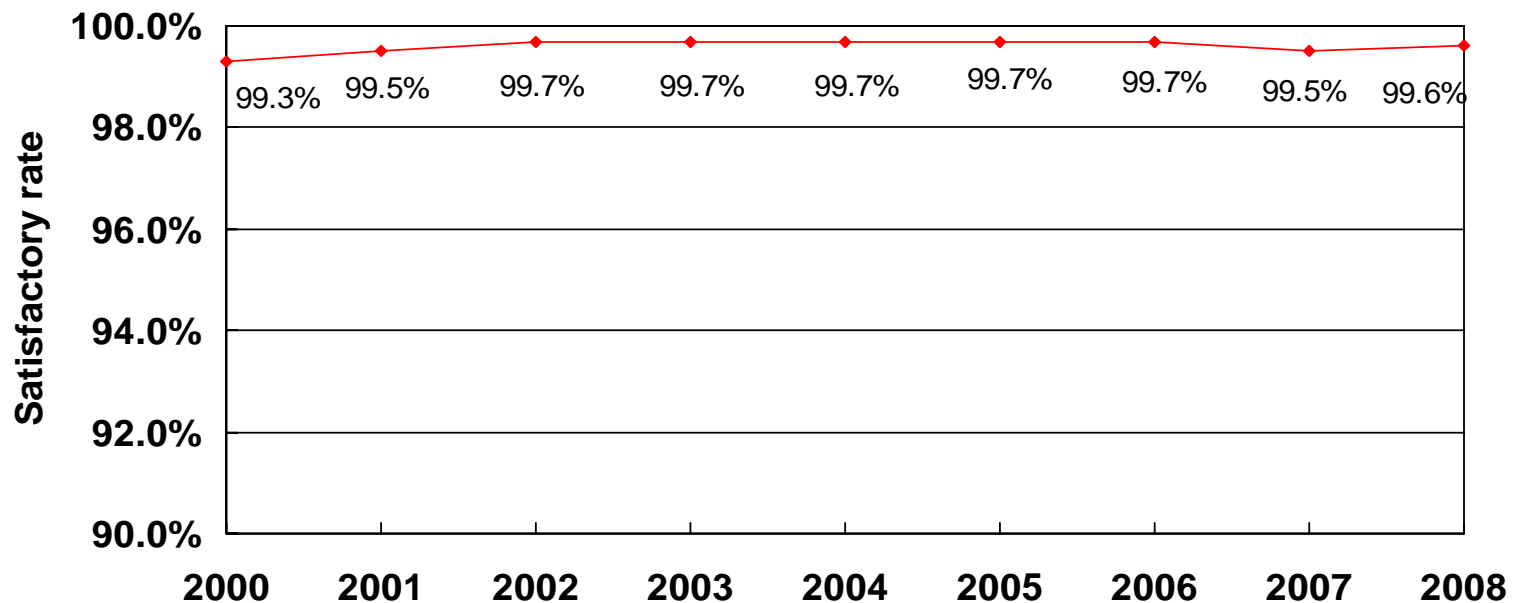
Survey on popular food

- The CFS has conducted several surveys to cover the popular food of which many consumers are exposed.
 - ❑ Chinese Breakfast
 - ❑ Street Snacks
 - ❑ Western and Fast Food Style Breakfast
 - ❑ Children Snacks

Overall satisfactory rate

- The overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%, which was comparable to those of recent years.

**Overall satisfactory rates of food surveillance programme
(2000 - 2008)**



Results of different types of food

- Total 233 unsatisfactory samples

Food group	No. of samples*	Unsatisfactory samples	Satisfactory rate
Vegetables, fruits & products	24200	39	99.8%
Meat, poultry & products	8200	71	99.1%
Aquatic products	5100	39	99.2%
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	12600	15	99.9%
Cereal, grains and products	1400	12	99.1%
Others	14900	57	99.6%
Total	66400	233	99.6%

* N.B.: Figures are rounded.

Major problems of the unsatisfactory samples

Food group	No. of unsat. samples	Major problems (no. of unsatisfactory samples)
Vegetables, fruits & products	39	Preservatives(18), metallic contamination(11), others(10)
Meat, poultry & products	71	Sulphur dioxide in fresh meat(50), veterinary drug residues(9), preservatives(8), others(4)
Aquatic products	39	Veterinary drug residues(15), metallic contamination(9), formaldehyde in noodlefish(5), norovirus nucleic acid in raw oysters(5), others(5)
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	15	Melamine(10), hygienic indicators(5)
Cereal, grains and products	12	Preservatives(9), others(3)
Others	57	Melamine(30), pathogens(15), colouring matters(5), others(7)

Major problems of the unsatisfactory samples

- For vegetables, fruits and products, the unsatisfactory samples mainly related to preservatives. They included excessive use of sulphur dioxide and benzoic acid in sweetened fruits and vegetables, dried vegetables (e.g., dried daylily flowers & bamboo fungus) and preserved vegetables. Besides cadmium at levels exceeding the legal limit was detected in samples of vegetables.
- Sulphur dioxide in fresh meat accounted for the major proportion of the unsatisfactory samples of meat, poultry and their products. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has immediately stepped up inspection and sampling of fresh meat. FEHD would take prosecution action against the unsatisfactory samples.
- The unsatisfactory samples of aquatic products mainly involved veterinary drug residues. The CFS has found trace amount of malachite green and nitrofurans metabolites in some minced fish and shrimp samples. Besides, mercury was detected in some large predatory fish samples.
- Apart from melamine, the major problem of other food was the failure of tests for pathogens in mixed dishes (e.g., rice dish, noodles and sandwiches). The FEHD has requested the concerned food premises to make immediate improvement in hygiene. All follow up samples were satisfactory for pathogens.

Major problems of the unsatisfactory samples

- In response to the food incident related to melamine, the CFS has been on risk-based to take diverse kinds of food by phases for testing of melamine. They include infant formula, milk powder, baby food, milk and milk beverage, frozen confection, milk products, fish, meat, poultry, vegetables, egg, flour and others.
- As at end of December 2008, the CFS has collected about 5000 samples. There were 40 unsatisfactory samples (involved 18 different brands and 4 loose items of food). The overall satisfactory rate was 99.2%.
- The unsatisfactory samples included milk and milk beverages, frozen confection, eggs and others such as snacks like chocolate, crackers and sweets.
- The CFS has announced the unsatisfactory results timely. The affected products were immediately removed from the market.

Advice for food trade and consumers

- The trade should comply with legal requirements and follow “good manufacturing practice” (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.
- The consumers should patronize licensed restaurants and reliable retailers. They should maintain balanced diet to reduce food risk.
- The trade and consumers should always follow the “5 Keys to Food Safety” to minimize the risk of foodborne diseases.
 - ❑ Choose - Choose safe raw materials
 - ❑ Clean - Keep hands and utensils clean
 - ❑ Separate - Separate raw and cooked food
 - ❑ Cook - Cook thoroughly
 - ❑ Safe Temperature - Keep food at safe temperature

Food surveillance programme in 2009

- Building on the experiences gained in past two years, the CFS will maintain the three-prong food surveillance approach to cover routine, targeted and seasonal food surveillance in 2009.
- In accordance with the latest amendment and development of regulations, the CFS will modify its surveillance programme. For example, testing of melamine in food will be incorporated into routine surveillance in 2009.
- The CFS will conduct targeted food surveillance projects to focus on those with non-compliant problems. They include testing of sulphur dioxide in meat samples.
- There will be specific surveys to address the safety concerns of popular food items such as “cart noodles” and “local style desserts”, in which large number of people are exposed to.