

Targeted Food Surveillance on *Bacillus cereus* in fermented bean curds

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Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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Introduction

■ Background

- ❑ Fermented bean curd is popular amongst Chinese and requires fermentation during manufacturing.
 - ❑ *Bacillus cereus* is a ubiquitous bacteria in soil and environment. Unhygienic food processing during the long fermentation process may pose a risk of bacterial over-growth.
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has recently conducted a targeted food surveillance project on fermented bean curd to assess the level of *Bacillus cereus* in bottled fermented bean curd available locally.

Food samples and results

- 32 samples of 19 brands were collected from various locations for testing of *Bacillus cereus*.
- According to the “Microbiological Guidelines for Ready-to-eat Food”, Each gram of ready-to-eat food containing *Bacillus cereus* at a level greater than or equal to 100000 is potentially hazardous to the consumer.
- Of the 32 samples, 28 were satisfactory containing (< 100000 organisms per gram). The overall satisfactory rate was 87.5%.
- There were 4 unsatisfactory samples found to contain *Bacillus cereus* from 290000 /g to 2000000 /g.

Follow-up actions

- Trace source
- Request vendors to stop sale and dispose of incriminated items
- Issue warning letters to concerned vendors
- Take follow-up samples
- Take prosecution actions if there is sufficient evidence

Advices to public

- Purchase fermented bean curds from reliable retail outlets
- Check the expiry dates of the fermented bean curds and consume within the recommended period.

Advices to food trade

- Observe good hygienic practices at all stages of preparation
- Keep the environment of the food factory and the whole production line clean
- Sell food from reliable sources