

Targeted Food Surveillance — Colouring Matters in Chili and Curry Seasonings

Centre for Food Safety

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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Introduction

■ Background

- Colouring matters are commonly applied to sauce and seasoning powder (e.g., chili sauce, chili powder, curry sauce and curry powder) to intensify their colour.
- According to law, some are permitted colouring matters while some are not. Examples of non-permitted colouring matters include Sudan dyes, orange II and rhodamine B.

■ Objective

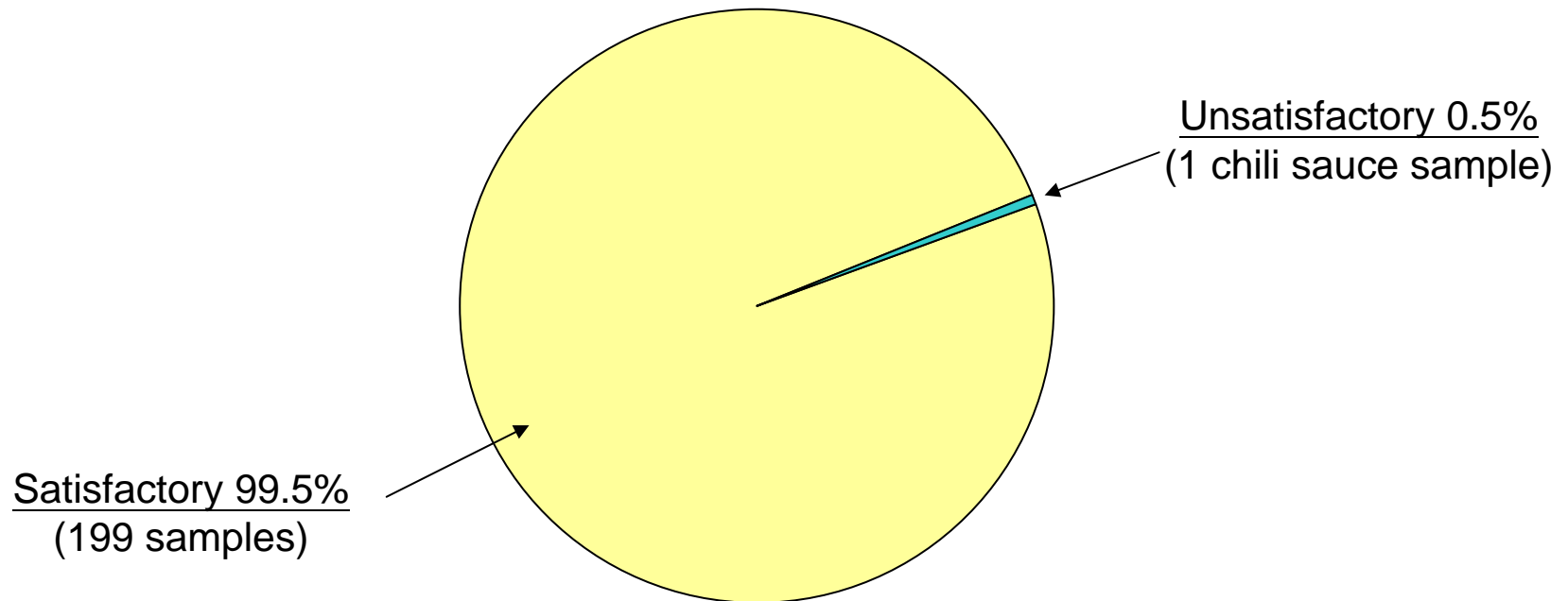
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) recently conducted a targeted food surveillance project to assess the use of colouring matters in chili and curry seasonings.

Types of samples

- 200 samples (such as chili sauce, chili powder, curry sauce and curry powder) were collected for testing of colouring matters such as:
 - ❑ Sudan dyes
 - ❑ Orange II
 - ❑ Rhodamine B
 - ❑ Yellow OB
 - ❑ Dimethyl Yellow

Overall result

- Only 1 sample was unsatisfactory. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.5%.



Overall result

- No sample was found to contain Sudan dyes.
- The unsatisfactory sample was a chili sauce. It was detected to contain rhodamine B.
- Reports indicated that rhodamine B may cause nausea, vomiting and red discolouration of urine in humans. However, the level used for colouring of food should not cause immediate adverse health effects.
- Under the law, rhodamine B is not a permitted colouring matter in food.

Follow up actions

- Issue warning letters.
- Ask concerned retailers to stop selling and to dispose of those food items.
- Request concerned food factory to recall the affected products.
- Take prosecution actions if there is sufficient evidence.

Advice for trade

- Under the law, no food intended for sale for human consumption shall contain any added non-permitted colouring matters. The maximum penalty for conviction is a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for 6 months.
- Source materials from reliable suppliers. Conduct quality audit to incoming materials and end products to ensure that ingredients used do not contain any non-permitted colouring matters.
- Adhere to the "good manufacturing practice" (GMP) for manufacturing food products, and comply with the legal requirements when using food additives.

Advice for consumers

- Purchase sauce and seasoning powder from reliable shops.
- Read carefully the information on labels when shopping for foods.
- Avoid choosing those sauce and seasoning powder which are of abnormally intensified colour.
- Take a balanced diet so as to avoid excessive exposure to food additives from a small range of food items.