

Advice to the Trade on Tear Gas or Other Contaminants and Food Safety

Background

In view of the recent social events, there are concerns from some restaurants and food retail shops that food they are selling or food ingredients they are using may be contaminated by tear gas or other substances. The Centre for Food Safety has the following advice for the trade.

Contaminants and Food Safety

In general, food may be contaminated by different substances in the environment. Whether tear gas or other contaminants will affect food safety depends on a number of factors, such as the storage conditions of food, the duration of exposure and the concentration of contaminants, etc.

Advice from the Centre for Food Safety

- Food should be properly stored in a suitable place such as a clean and covered food-grade container to reduce the risk of food contamination.
- When tear gas is being released nearby, restaurants or food retail shops should close all doors and windows, turn off the air conditioner, and seal the gaps over the doors and windows with wet towels to reduce the chance of contamination indoors.
- After any such incident, check whether the packaging of food is intact and whether any food is damaged or contaminated. For the sake of prudence, food suspected to be contaminated or showing abnormality should not be consumed.
- In general, contaminants on the surface of some kinds of food, such as fruits or vegetables, can be reduced by washing with running water. However, for the sake of prudence, food suspected to be contaminated or showing abnormality should not be consumed.

In addition, to ensure food safety, the trade should always observe the Five Keys to Food Safety, including: choose (choose safe raw materials); clean (keep hands and utensils clean); separate (separate raw and cooked food); cook (cook thoroughly); and safe temperature (keep food at safe temperature).

