# Food Safety Report for July 2010


Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

**August 2010**

食物環境衞生署
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

食物安全中心
Centre for Food Safety

# Introduction

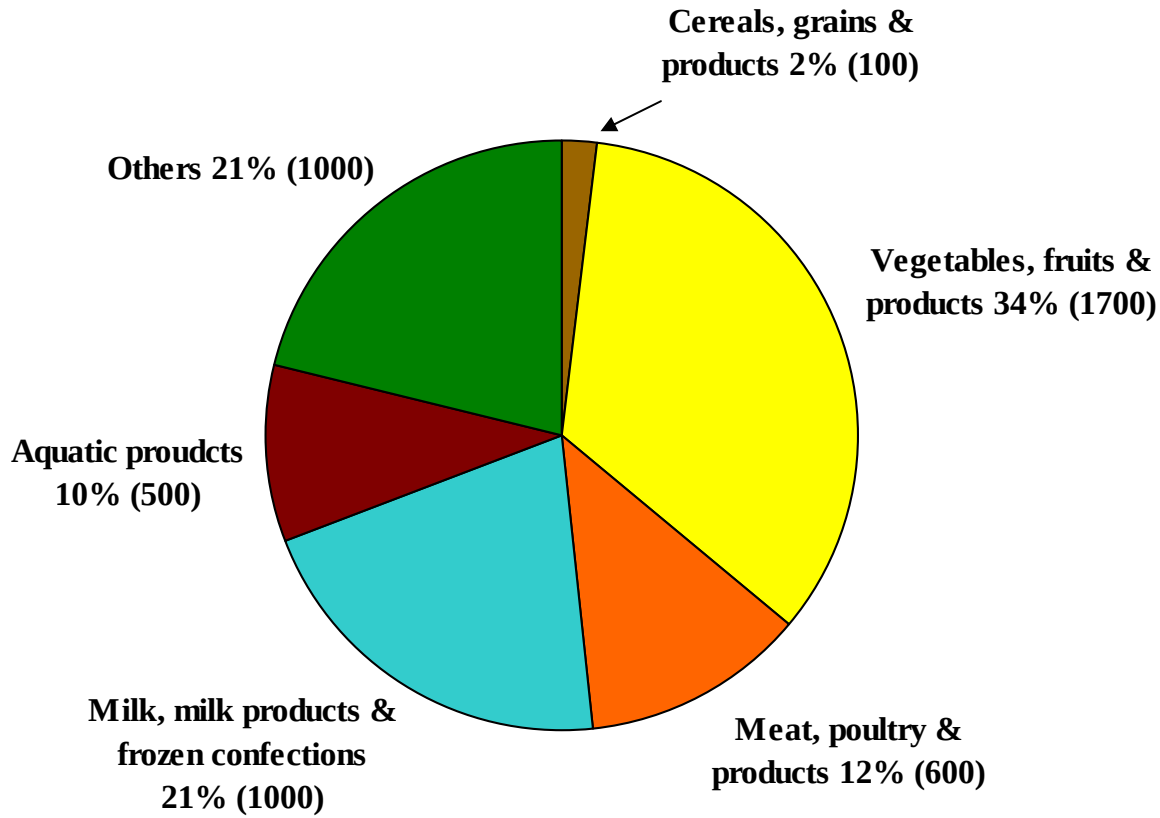
- The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopts the three-tier food surveillance approach, i.e. routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance and seasonal food surveillance to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for chemical and microbiological tests.

- The CFS releases the “Food Safety Report” every month so as to allow the public to obtain the latest food safety information more timely. Besides, the CFS has also released the results of a survey on popular food items: Chinese regional cuisines recently.

- This presentation gives an account of the food surveillance sample analyses that were completed in July 2010.

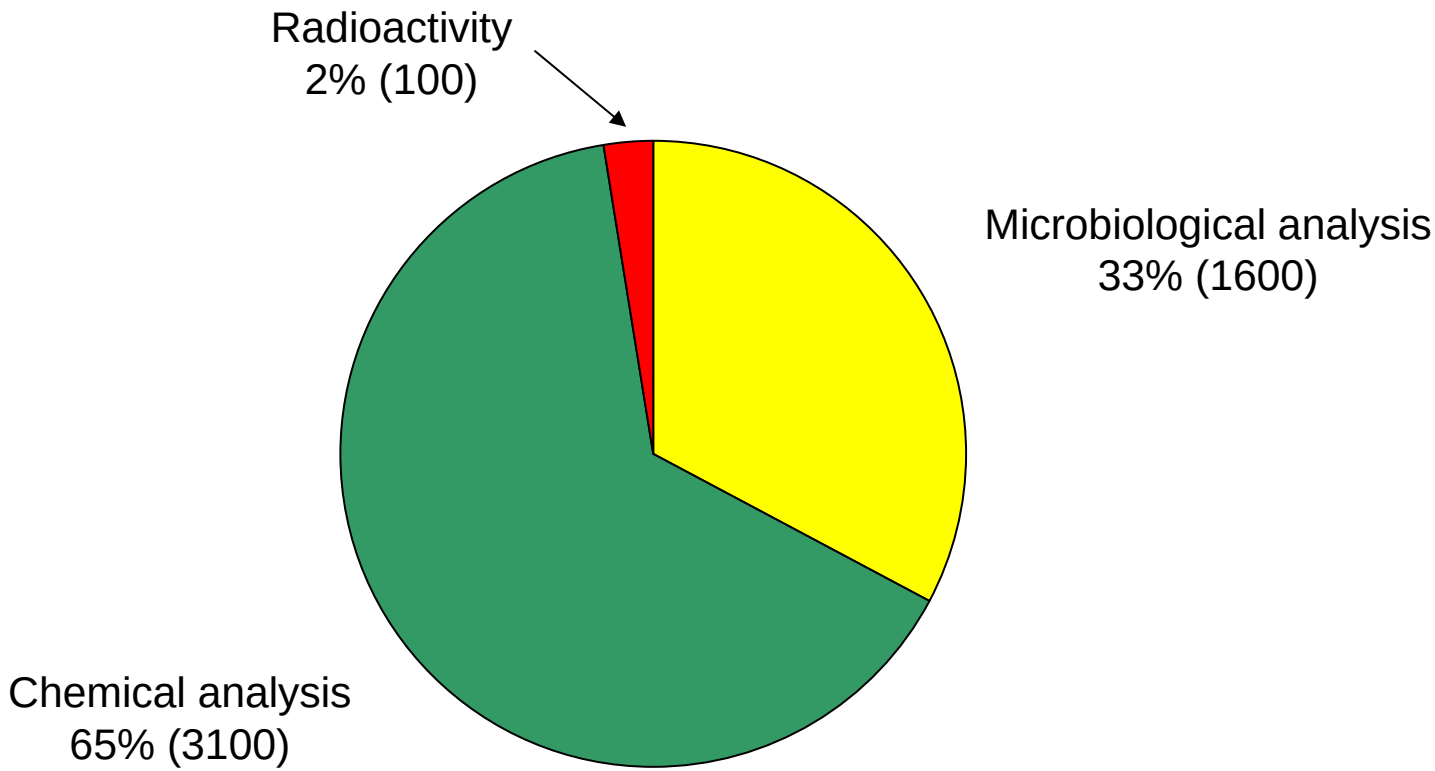
# Types of food tested

- About 4900 food samples of various food groups were tested.




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

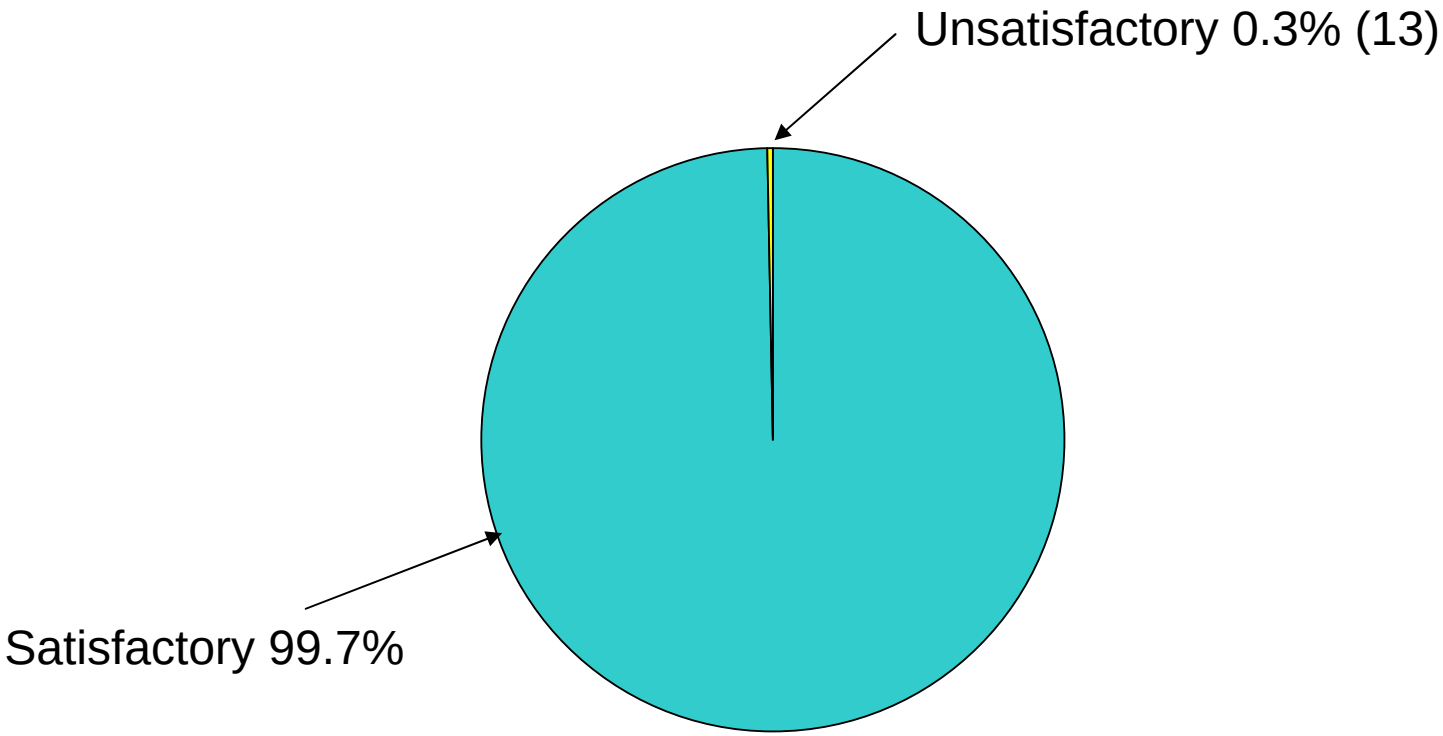
# Types of testing




N.B.: Figures in brackets are rounded

# Overall results

- Total 13 unsatisfactory samples.  The overall satisfactory rate was 99.7%.



# Unsatisfactory samples

- 13 unsatisfactory food samples included 1 previously announced result. The remaining 12 unsatisfactory samples are as follows:

| Food Group | *No. of Samples Tested* | *No. of Unsatisfactory Samples* |
|---|---|---|
| **Vegetables, fruits & products** | 1700 | 0 |
| **Meat, poultry & products** | 600 | 5 |
| **Aquatic products** | 500 | 3 |
| **Milk, milk products & frozen confections** | 1000 | 0 |
| **Cereal, grains & products** | 100 | 0 |
| **Others** | 1000 | 4 |
| ***Total*** | ***4900*** | ***12*** |

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

# 1. Vegetables, fruits & products

- About 1700 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 (included methamidophos, isocarbophos and DDT)
    - Colouring matters
    - Metallic contamination

- All samples 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)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.1%, with 5 unsatisfactory samples in this report.







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

## Preservatives

- 4 unsatisfactory samples:

| Sample | Unsatisfactory testing item | Result |
|---|---|---|
| 4 Fresh beef | Sulphur dioxide | 14-2200 ppm (1) |

(1) Sulphur dioxide is not permitted in fresh (including chilled and frozen) meat. On the other hand, it is permitted in foods such as pickled fruits and juices. It is of low toxicity and will not cause adverse health effects. For individuals who are allergic to this preservative, there may be symptoms of breathing difficulty, headache and nausea. Since it is water soluble, most of it can be removed through washing and cooking.

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

## Pathogens

- 1 unsatisfactory sample:

| Sample | Unsatisfactory testing item | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Barbecued pork | *Staphylococcus aureus* | 11000/g (1) |

(1) *Staphylococcus aureus* may cause gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

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

## Other tests

- Samples for other tests (e.g. veterinary drug residues and colouring matters) were satisfactory.

# 3. Aquatic products

- About 500 samples were collected.  They generally covered fish, shellfish, shrimp/prawn, crab, squid and their products.

- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests (e.g. preservatives, colouring matters, metallic contamination, biotoxins and veterinary drug residues)

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.2%, with 3 unsatisfactory samples in this report.




# 3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

## Metallic contamination

- 2 unsatisfactory samples:

| Sample | Unsatisfactory testing item | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Frozen black cod | Mercury | 0.95 ppm (1) |
| Chilled swordfish | Mercury | 1.6 ppm (1) |

(1) The detected levels exceeded legal limit. Occasional consumption will not cause adverse health effect, but consumption on a long-term basis may affect the nervous system.

# 3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

## Veterinary drug residues

- Except for the previously announced sample of Sichuan mala mandarin fish, there was 1 unsatisfactory sample:

| Sample | Unsatisfactory testing item | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Frozen bass | Malachite green | 0.0221 ppm (1) |

(1) Not permitted in food, but the detected level was unlikely to pose adverse health effects upon normal consumption.

# 3. Aquatic products (Cont'd)

**Other tests**

- The remaining samples for other tests (e.g. pathogens, preservatives, colouring matters and biotoxins) were satisfactory.

# 4. Milk, milk products & frozen confections

- About 1000 samples were tested. They included ice-cream, cheese, milk and milk products.

- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests (total bacterial count and pathogens)
  - Chemical tests (e.g. melamine, colouring matters and sweeteners)

- All samples were satisfactory.

# 5. Cereal, grains and products

- About 100 samples included rice/noodles, flour, bread and breakfast cereal.
- Analysis included:
  - Microbiological tests
  - Chemical tests (e.g. preservatives, sweeteners, colouring matters and metallic contamination)
- All samples were satisfactory.




# 6. Other food commodities

- About 1000 food samples were collected. Types included:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mixed dishes<br>▫ Pathogens, preservatives, colouring matters & metallic contamination | Condiments and sauces<br>▫ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners |
| Dim Sum<br>▫ Preservatives | Snack<br>▫ Preservatives, colouring matters & sweeteners |
| Beverages<br>▫ Preservatives, colouring matters, sweeteners & metallic contamination | Eggs and egg products<br>▫ Colouring matters & melamine |
| Sushi and sashimi<br>▫ Microbiological tests | Others |
| Sugar and sweets<br>▫ Preservatives, colouring matters, sweeteners & metallic contamination | |

- Overall satisfactory rate was 99.6%, with 4 unsatisfactory samples in this report.

# 6. Other food commodities (Cont'd)

## Preservatives

- 4 unsatisfactory samples:

| Sample | Unsatisfactory testing item | Result |
|---|---|---|
| Cherry soda | Benzoic acid | 206 ppm (1) |
| Apple cider | Sorbic acid | 296 ppm (1) |
| 2 Fried fritters | Boric acid | 400-670 ppm (2) |

(1) The detected levels exceeded legal limits, but they are of low toxicity and will not cause adverse health effects.

(2) Not permitted in food, but the detected levels were unlikely to pose adverse health effects upon normal consumption.

# Follow-up actions

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

# Advice to the trade

- 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.
- *Staphylococcus aureus* is commonly present in human skin, hair and nasal cavity. High dose of such bacteria present in food indicates that cross contamination due to poor personal hygiene of the food handlers has likely taken place. Food handlers should always observe good personal and wash their hands properly before handling food. If there is a wound on the hand, cover it properly with a waterproof bandage or wear a glove before handling food.
- Should comply with the legal requirements and follow “good manufacturing practice” (GMP). They should use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner.
- Should source food from reliable suppliers.

# Advice to consumers

- Should patronize licensed restaurants and reliable retailers.
- Do not buy or consume meat which is unnaturally red.
- Take a balanced diet so as to avoid excessive exposure to food additives from a small range of food items.
- Pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children are the susceptible groups being affected by mercury. When choosing food, they should avoid eating large predatory fish.