

Inspection of Mainland-Imported Food and Chinese Herbal Medicine Strengthened to Ensure Public Food Safety

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Sales of seasonal New Year's supplies and snacks continue to grow at markets and retail outlets during the Lunar New Year holidays. In order to safeguard food safety of the public, health authorities conducted spot checks on Mainland-imported New Year food and supplies prior to the New Year holidays, during which they uncovered excessive levels of citrinin in red yeast rice and other foods. The affected foods were immediately banned from import, and in order to strengthen control on product quality, the Mainland side was notified through contact windows established under the Cross-Strait Food Safety Agreement.

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) states that, since the signing of the Cross-Strait Food Safety Agreement on November 4 of 2008 to December 31 of 2012, the two sides have mutually reported 982 cases involving unsafe food between the Strait through institutionalized contact windows established by each side. The reported items, including Mainland-imported tremella with pesticide residues and abalone tainted with prohibited veterinary drugs, were effectively stopped at the border.

Due to the fact that most Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) used by the Taiwanese public comes from mainland China, the two sides have also signed the Cross-Strait Agreement on Medical and Health Cooperation to ensure drug safety, focusing on the establishment of CHM source management mechanisms and strengthening of CHM imports and exports inspection. Through implementation methods negotiated between health authorities on both sides, the Department of Health (DOH) on August 1, 2012, began requiring companies applying to import 10 types of high-volume CHM from the Mainland—including Chinese red dates, huangqi (*Astragalus membranaceus*), Chinese angelica (*Angelicae sinensis*), licorice, rehmannia, chuanxiong (*Wallich ligusticum*), tuckahoe (*Wolfiporia extensa*), white peony root (*Paeonia lactiflora*), *Atractylodes macrocephala*, and eucommia bark—to attach inspection certificates issued by the

Mainland to verify that such items have been tested and conform to Taiwan standards on levels of abnormal substances. With the implementation of CHM border management and screening measures preventing import of substandard goods, the public may be assured when purchasing CHM products.

According to DOH statistics, a total of 857 CHM inspections have been completed and clearance approved as of December 31, 2012, out of which, Mainland-imported products of the aforementioned CHM types totaled 4,596,019 kilograms, all with attached inspection certificates conformed to Taiwan standards. Furthermore, Mainland-imported CHM items underwent spot inspections at the Taiwan border, including 38,386 kilograms of red dates, 41,768 kilograms of huangqi (*Astragalus membranaceus*), 16,396 kilograms of Chinese angelica, and 29,846 kilograms of licorice. All of the tested products passed the inspection.

People traditionally buy various types of poultry and meat products for personal use or gifts during the Lunar New Year holidays. In order to rigorously control the public's food safety, related agencies will not close or rest during the holiday period. Health authorities across Taiwan will conduct even stricter and more intensive random tests of various types of New Year's supplies on the market to ensure these items conform to relevant food safety rules. The government will also maintain contact with the Mainland side through windows established under the Cross-Strait Food Safety Agreement and Cross-Strait Agreement on Medical and Health Cooperation in exchanging information on cross-strait food and CHM safety, so as to ensure that the New Year's supplies purchased are hygienic and safe. The MAC also hereby reminds consumers to choose properly packaged and labeled products when purchasing New Year supplies, for products with CAS and GMP quality food marks or clear and complete labeling offer greater guarantees.