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Surveillance of food safety compliance of Hong Kong street food

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Hong Kong's food truck scheme is in full swing to launch. Food and environmental safety is one of the measures requires attentions. This study is a pilot surveillance of food microbial safety of both licensed and mobile vendors selling Chinese ready-to-eat snack foods. The hygiene compliance of vendors was also assessed. Nine types of 32 samples of cantonese snacks were selected for comparison with a final focus on one traditional snack, the steamed rice cake with red beans called Put Chai Ko (PCK). PCK is usually sold at room temperature and served with bamboo sticks but some shops would sell it steam fresh. 16 vending sites including supermarkets, street markets and snack stores were visited. Aerobic counts, yeast and mould, coliform, salmonella as well as *Staphylococcus aureus* detections were carried out. Salmonella was not detected in all samples. Coagulase positive *Staphylococcus aureus* were found in six (three out of six from PCK) of the 14 samples sold at room temperature. One was in an unacceptable range of total CFU>10⁵. The rest were only satisfactory. The checklist ran observations on personal hygiene, premises hygiene, food safety control, food storage, cleaning and sanitization as well as waste disposals. Maximum score was 25. The highest score obtained was only 20. Three stores were below average and two of these were selling PCK. Most of the non-compliances were on food processing, sanitization and waste disposal. In conclusion, though no food poisoning outbreaks happened, risk of food safety hazard existed in these stores, especially among street vendors. Attention needed in the traditional practice of food selling and that food handlers might not have sufficient knowledge to properly handle food products.

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