

Sanitation and Safety Control of Agricultural Products

Hwang-Jaw Lee, PhD
Board Director, Taiwan Flowers Development Association

The Taiwan government has established a complete control system to monitor and test pesticide residues on agricultural products. COA is in charge of the process before products go to the market and the Department of Health takes over once the products are marketed (including imported items).

To ensure that pesticides residue monitoring becomes a full-scale practice and that the results are sufficiently representative, AFA(Agriculture and Food Agency), TACTRI (Taiwan Agricultural Chemicals and Toxic Substances Research Institute), and various corresponding offices in county and city governments conduct annual consultations to produce a plan for the crop types, areas, sample numbers, and division of sampling work. Testing is conducted by TACTRI and its regional offices by means of multi-residue analysis according to regulations. All violated cases are immediately placed under the ruling county or city government's control, which entails notifying farmers to delay the harvest, implementing and tracking education and counseling, sending them to compulsory classes, recording interviews with them, requesting them to sign an affidavit, continuing random checks, and imposing a NT\$15,000 to NT\$150,000 fine according to the Agro- pesticides Management Act. COA announces information on farmers who have violation cases to the public every month to stop their products like fruits and vegetables from being sold to the market. The purpose is to apply control at the source.

For example, in 2011, 14,088 samples of vegetables, fruits, rice, and tea were tested for pesticides residue. Out of these, 13,426 were found to be safe, accounting for 95.30% of the total sample tested. The Taiwan Agricultural Research Institute also assisted farmers' associations, cooperatives, etc., to perform by rapid bioassay test for pesticides residue test on 391,116 cases of fruits and vegetables before they were marketed. This helped farmers inspect the pesticides residue on their products, educated them to keep track of the amounts of pesticides used, and served as a reference for safe harvest time.

In the area of heavy metal contamination, inspection of rice paddies suspected of contamination by cadmium, mercury, and lead is conducted every year. In 2011, 471 tests were performed, of which 26 cases totaling 4.61 hectares of rice and peanut were found to be over legal standards and 46,320 kg of rice and peanut were destroyed.

Data source: Council of Agriculture

Date submitted: November 27, 2013

Reviewed, edited and uploaded: November 27, 2013