

# TESTING FOR ALLERGENS IN FOOD

Food allergy is an immune response meant to protect the body. Yet such response can cause discomfort or, in severe cases, even death. In recent years, the Centre for Food Safety has occasionally announced the Food Alert regarding the undeclared allergenic ingredients in food products. The manufacturers and importers are required to remove the affected products from the shelves or initiate a recall. Food manufacturers should review their product composition and production process, and label the allergenic substances accurately to protect their corporate reputation and consumers' health



Currently, in Hong Kong, there is no permissive limits for the amount of allergenic substances in food because even very tiny amount can cause allergic reaction. Under section 132W of the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations, if any substances known to be allergenic are present in food, they must be declared on the food label. According to the regulations, if the food contains any of the following 8 kinds of substances, they must be specified in the ingredient list. In EU, US, Canada and Australia, these 8 categories are among the allergens that must be labeled.

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| 1. cereals containing gluten (namely wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, their hybridized strains and their products); | 4. fish and fish products;                     | 7. tree nuts and nut products,                                   |
| 2. crustacea and crustacean products;   | 5. peanuts, soyabeans and their products;      | 8. sulphite (in a concentration of 10 parts per million or more) |
| 3. eggs and egg products;   | 6. milk and milk products (including lactose); |  |

If a product does not contain these ingredients, it still has risk to be cross contaminated by residual allergens. This may happen when the product shares the production line or plant with allergenic food.

STC uses polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and ELISA Kits to detect whether a food sample contains any allergens. We can also provide chemical testing for the detection of sulfur dioxide in food to help manufacturers detect unlabeled allergens.

As an independent, not-for-profit testing, inspection and certification organization with a history of more than 50 years, STC provides comprehensive food-grade testing services to food manufacturers and importers. With advanced testing technologies, we are dedicated to improving consumer confidence in your products and enhancing your brand image by ensuring your products are up to safety requirements.

For more details, please contact our Chemical, Food and Pharmaceutical Division:

10 Dai Wang Street, Taipo Industrial Estate, Taipo, N.T., Hong Kong  
香港新界大埔工業邨大宏街10號

+852 2666 1839 / 1878 / 1832

+852 2663 1284

hkcf@stc.group

www.stc.group

