

1,600¹¹⁻³ bottles of wine handed in

More than 1,600 bottles of suspect Austrian wine have been surrendered, said the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr Eric Ho.

Mr Ho said the customs service has also collected 131 samples of all available brands of such wines for testing following the discovery in Germany of a toxic substance, diethylene-glycol, in certain Austrian table wines.

Tests on 104 samples have been completed, 16 of which have been certified to contain diethylene-glycol — an anti-freeze chemical.

Replying to questions by Mr Chan Kam-chuen, he said it is not the general practice of Customs and Excise Department to test all available alcoholic beverages on the local market.

The wine trade has been most co-operative in its surrender of stocks and he did not believe there should be a large stock unaccounted for.

Up till yesterday, 1,657 bottles of suspect Austrian wine have been surrendered.

In the light of the Government Chemist's tests, the customs service publicised the names of those brands found to contain the toxic substance and warned the public of the danger of drinking these adulterated wines.

He was confident that with the prompt action and warning by the Customs Service and the wide publicity given, the public should have adequate protection from adulterated alcoholic beverages.

"Any person who imports, distills, makes, manufactures, sells, exposes for sale or has in his possession for sale, supplies or deals in any adulterated liquor — and I am advised wine contaminated with diethylene-glycol falls into this category — commits an offence under Section 61 of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance and is liable to a fine of \$100,000, imprisonment for two years and forfeiture of such stock," Mr Ho said.