

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

LC Paper No. CB(2) 251/02-03  
(These minutes have been seen by  
the Administration)

**LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Minutes of special meeting  
on Wednesday, 2 October 2002 at 10 am  
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members present** : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP (Chairman)  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP (Deputy Chairman)  
Hon James TO Kun-sun  
Hon WONG Yung-kan  
Hon CHOY So-yuk  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok  
Hon WONG Sing-chi

**Member attending** : Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan

**Members absent** : Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum  
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo  
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP

**Public Officers Attending** : **Item I**

Mrs Ingrid YEUNG  
Acting Deputy Secretary (Food and Environment Hygiene)  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Edward LAW  
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food and Environmental Hygiene) 2  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Dr S P MAK  
Deputy Director (Food and Public Health)  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr Y Y HO  
Consultant (Community Medicine)  
(Risk Assessment and Communication)  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Ms Rhonda LO  
Assistant Director (Operation)3  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr P Y LEUNG  
Deputy Director of Health (1)

Dr L Y TSE  
Consultant (Community Medicine) 1  
Department of Health

**Item II**

Mrs Ingrid YEUNG  
Acting Deputy Secretary (Food and Environment Hygiene)  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Edward LAW  
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food and Environmental Hygiene)2  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr M K CHEUNG  
Assistant Director (Fisheries)  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

**Item III**

Mr Gregory LEUNG  
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Mrs Ingrid YEUNG  
Acting Deputy Secretary (Food and Environment Hygiene)  
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Dr Gloria TAM  
Assistant Director (Food Surveillance & Control)  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Ms Rhonda LO  
Assistant Director (Operation)3  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

**Attendance by : Item II**  
**Invitation**

Joint Committee of Hong Kong Fisherman's Organization

Mr PANG Wah-kan  
Vice-Chairman

Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung  
Committee Member

Hong Kong Fishermen's Association

Mr LEUNG Wai-ying  
Chairman

Mr LAM Tsui-wang  
Member

The Federation of Fishermen's Co-operative Societies of  
Southern District, Limited

Mr LAI Muk-kum  
Vice-Chairman

Mr LAM Tong  
Committee Member

The Federation of Fishermen's Co-operative Societies of Shau  
Kei Wan District, Limited

Mr SIN Mei  
Chairman

Mr KWOK So  
Vice-Chairman

Hong Kong Fisheries Development Association

Mr CHEUNG Siu-keung  
Chairman

Mr NG Yau-wing  
Director

The Castle Peak Fishermen's Credit Co-operative Society,  
Unlimited

---

Mr PO Siu-yau  
Committee Member

Joint Association of Fishing Development (HK) Limited

Mr CHEUNG Ko  
Chairman

Hong Kong and Kowloon Fishermen Association Limited

Mr LAU Kuan-kwai  
Representative

**Item III**

Consumer Council

Mrs CHAN WONG Shui  
Chief Executive

Dr Victor HUNG  
Chief Trade Practices Officer

Kowloon Poultry Transporter and Poulterer Association

Mr WONG Tak-leung  
Chairman

Kowloon Poultry Laan Merchants Association

Mr WONG Kam-yiu  
Chairman

Mr WONG Kan-pui  
Deputy Chairman

Hong Kong Poultry Wholesalers Association

Mr TSUI Ming-tuen  
Chairman

Mr LAW Tung-yiu  
Deputy Chairman

Mr KWAN Shu-kuen  
Secretary General

Hong Kong Livestock Industry Association

Mr NG Po-wing  
Vice Chairman

Mr CHAN Kin-yip  
Deputy Chairman

Federation of Hong Kong Kowloon New Territories Hawker  
Associations

---

Mr FUNG Mun-hong  
Chairman

Hong Kong and Kowloon Poultry Dealers and Workers  
Association

---

Mr WONG Kam-kan  
Chairman

Mr NG Ka-lok  
Vice Chairman

Mr WONG Wing-nam  
Chief General Affairs Officer

The New Territories Chicken Breeders Association Limited

Mr KWAN Wing-kin  
Chairman

Mr HUNG Yuet-kin  
Vice Chairman

Mr SZETO Ning-shun  
Vice Chairman

Mr CHUNG Ka-yau  
Director

Hong Kong New Territories Poultry-Culture (Geese & Ducks)  
Mutual Aid Association

---

Mr KWOK Chi-yau  
Chairman

Quality Broiler Development Association

Mr CHAN Yu-yuk  
Deputy Chairman

Poultry Trade Workers Union

Mr CHAN Pak-tong  
Deputy Chairman

Mr CHAN Lam-fai  
Deputy Organisation Officer

Mr HONG Sen-chee  
Deputy Welfare Officer

World's Poultry Science Association Hong Kong Branch

Mr Peter WONG Chun-kow  
Chairman

Mr KWOK Ming-cheung  
Committee Member

Preparatory Committee of Hong Kong Chilled Poultry Trade

Mr KWOK Shi-hing  
Representative

Mr CHAN Wai-ming  
Representative

Mr TSE Chi-keung  
Representative

Hong Kong Poultry Wholesalers And Retailers Association

Mr Steven WONG Wai-chuen  
Chairman

Mr POON Fook-loi  
Representative

**Clerk in Attendance** : Mrs Constance LI  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)5

**Staff in Attendance** : Ms Joanne MAK  
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)2

---

Action

**I. Measures to control the spread of dengue fever**  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)2855/01-02(01)]

The Chairman said that this item had been added to the agenda in view of the wide public concern about control of dengue fever following the recent discovery of local cases.

2. Acting Deputy Secretary (Food and Environment Hygiene) (DS(FEH)(Ag)) said that due to limited time available for preparation of paper, the Administration had only highlighted in its paper the efforts made in the control of dengue fever and mosquito problem. Details on the efforts made by various departments in implementing the control measures were given in the press releases attached to the Administration's paper. She added that the press release dated 30 September 2002 gave the latest position of the surveillance and control measures taken by various departments.

3. Deputy Director of Health (1) (DD(H)(1)) said that 13 local dengue fever cases had been found since confirmation of the first local case on 21 September 2002. Among the 13 local cases, 12 cases related to Ma Wan and one to Cheung Sha Wan. DD(H)(1) said that the weather of Hong Kong was favourable to the breeding of *Aedes albopictus*, which was capable of transmitting dengue virus. He added that as dengue fever was an endemic disease in Southeast Asia, the disease had posed a great threat to Hong Kong.

4. DD(H)(1) further said that there was no effective vaccine for dengue fever. The strategy for controlling the disease was through mosquito prevention and control work. According to the World Health Organisation, there were about 50 million people contracting the disease each year, and about 500 000 people suffered from the more serious dengue haemorrhage fever.

5. On mosquito control measures, DD(H)(1) said that the Department of Health (DH) had set up the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee on Dengue Fever in 2001 to keep the prevention and control strategies under review. Major anti-mosquito campaigns had also been launched annually. As regards surveillance work, DD(H)(1) said that the ovitrap index had been used as an indicator of the prevalence of mosquitoes. He said that the Administration had introduced the PCR testing method from the United States two years ago for conducting gene sequencing and confirmation of dengue fever cases. He further said that Hong Kong's laboratory technology was already quite advanced, and the test result could be available within 24 hours.

Action

6. DD(H)(1) pointed out that *Aedes albopictus* were less efficient in transmitting dengue fever as compared with another kind of dengue-causing mosquitoes "*Aedes aegypti*" which were commonly found in Southeast Asia. He said that so far *Aedes aegypti* had not been found in Hong Kong. DD(H)(1) further said that with the assistance of the mass media, the Administration had been able to efficiently disseminate information on dengue fever and anti-mosquito measures to the public within a very short time. He said that this was Hong Kong's advantage in implementing the control measures.

7. DD(H)(1) further said that gene sequencing analyses for the dengue virus in Ma Wan and Cheung Sha Wan had confirmed that the patients concerned all suffered from dengue serotype 1. He explained that there were four dengue serotypes and so far only serotype 1 had been found in Hong Kong. He added that a person who was re-infected with another dengue virus serotype had a higher risk of suffering from dengue haemorrhagic fever. He informed members that a total of 140 blood specimens had been collected at Ma Wan for testing and 12 cases had been confirmed to have contracted dengue fever. He said that the Administration was still analysing the infection cases and had yet to establish whether there was a spread of dengue virus from Ma Wan to Cheung Sha Wan.

Discussion

8. The Chairman noted from the Administration's paper that dengue fever had been made statutorily notifiable in Hong Kong since 1994 and, between 1994 and 2001, all of the confirmed infection cases were only imported cases. He asked why there was an outbreak of locally acquired infection in Hong Kong in this summer and in Ma Wan.

9. DD(H)(1) explained that the number of dengue fever cases in neighbouring countries had been increasing in 2002. This had posed greater threat to Hong Kong. DD(H)(1) pointed out that from March to May this year, the temperature and rainfall of Hong Kong were relatively higher than in previous years. During this period, the ovitrap index had also increased indicating that there was an increase in the breeding of mosquitoes.

10. Mr Michael MAK expressed concern about the lack of awareness among members of the public about the risks of dengue fever. He urged the Administration to enhance public education to increase general awareness of the importance of mosquito prevention and to avoid mosquito bites. He also asked how the Administration would promote participation of private housing estates in the anti-mosquito campaign.

Action

11. DD(H)(1) agreed with Mr MAK that many people overlooked the fact that dengue virus was transmitted through mosquito bites. It was therefore necessary to increase public awareness of the importance of preventing mosquito breeding, such as by clearing stagnant water. He called on members of the public to be on guard against mosquito breeding, as one pair of mosquitoes could breed 1 000 pairs within a few weeks. He undertook that the Administration would step up publicity on mosquito prevention and control.

12. Deputy Director (Food and Public Health) (DD(FPH)) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said that apart from the 2002 Anti-mosquito campaign which was conducted in three phases starting from April 2002, FEHD had carried out regular inspections and disinfection works throughout the year. She added that the anti-mosquito campaign aimed at increasing community awareness of the need to prevent and eliminate mosquito problems. In addition, FEHD had also issued letters and leaflets/posters to Owners' Corporations and the management companies of all private housing estates to disseminate anti-mosquito messages.

13. Assistant Director (Operation)3 (AD(O)3) added that FEHD's regular inspections were carried out throughout the territory, with priority given to areas favouring the harbourage of mosquitoes such as construction sites and vacant Government land. Particular attention was also paid to private housing estates where there were complaints about presence of stagnant water. In response to Mr Michael MAK, AD(O)3 said that FEHD would take prosecution actions if the parties concerned still did not take action to eliminate potential mosquito breeding places after warning.

14. In reply to Mr Michael MAK, DD(FPH) said that she would consider conducting a survey to assess the effectiveness of the publicity efforts. She added that many management companies of private housing estates had already made use of FEHD's technical hotline service to seek advice on anti-mosquito work.

15. Mr WONG Yung-kan asked why there was a sudden upsurge of dengue fever cases recently and whether the Administration had analysed the possible ways of the spread of the virus, for example, whether such virus or mosquitoes could be carried to Hong Kong through trees/plants imported from Southeast Asia. Mr WONG said that there had been many complaints about accumulation of stagnant water at construction sites especially those in the New Territories. In view of the recent heavy rainfall, he suggested that the Administration should consider conducting a territory-wide campaign to clear stagnant water in construction sites and refuse-dumping grounds.

16. DS(FEH)(Ag) responded that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) conducted inspections of animals and plants imported into Hong Kong. DD(H)(1) added that dengue fever virus was not transmissible through plants unless they carried mosquitoes with them, and the risk of plant carrying mosquitoes was the same as that of other goods. He considered that enhancing public awareness of mosquito control and good logistics management were more important.

Action

17. AD(O)3 added that FEHD staff conducted regular inspections on a weekly basis to construction sites to ensure prompt removal of accumulation of stagnant water and waste. After the recent discovery of local cases, FEHD had conducted further inspections on 23 and 24 September 2002 to more than 570 construction sites and instituted more than 100 prosecutions/warnings. Prosecutions had been taken against those construction sites which were found to have failed to make improvements during the follow-up inspection by FEHD staff on 30 September 2002. AD(O)3 added that members of the public could report litter blackspots to FEHD through its hotline number 2868 0000. In response to Mr WONG Yung-kan, AD(O)3 confirmed that the Administration also took enforcement actions against private construction sites for accumulation of stagnant water and waste.

18. Mr WONG Yung-kan considered that the Administration should be more vigilant and step up inspections of plants/fruits imported into the territory to prevent the spread of mosquito-transmitted disease. He also suggested that the Administration should look into the causes for an outbreak of dengue fever cases particularly in Ma Wan.

19. Ms Cyd HO asked whether the Administration could fully assess the dengue fever situation in Hong Kong, since it was difficult for doctors to diagnose such cases because the symptoms were similar to that of influenza. She suggested that the Administration should provide more detailed description of the symptoms of dengue fever to medical practitioners and the public, and strengthen the surveillance system for dengue fever cases by improving DH's network with private practitioners.

20. Responding to Ms Cyd HO's enquiry, DD(H)(1) said that blood tests had been conducted for about 140 construction site workers and residents in Ma Wan, and blood specimens had also been obtained in other districts for random tests. He said that among the 13 local cases discovered so far, 12 were confined to Ma Wan and there was one isolated case related to Cheung Sha Wan. He considered that the disease was not widespread.

21. DD(H)(1) further said that the Administration had already taken measures to strengthen the sensitivity of the surveillance system for dengue fever cases. He said that DH had issued fact sheets on dengue fever to all medical practitioners in Hong Kong and reminded them to report any suspected cases to DH or its regional offices. He said that where necessary, medical practitioners could also provide blood specimens of suspected cases to DH for testing.

22. DD(H)(1) advised that some people who had contracted dengue fever might only show symptoms like fever and mild joint pain, whereas some might have continued high temperature and eye pain. He said that DH had been conducting seminars for medical practitioners to enhance their knowledge of the symptoms of dengue fever and increase their vigilance to the disease. Dr LO Wing-lok advised that the Hong Kong Medical Association would also conduct a seminar on dengue fever on 19 October 2002 for medical practitioners.

Action

23. Ms Cyd HO requested the Administration to further explain the differences in symptoms between influenza and dengue fever. DD(H)(1) replied that a person suffering from dengue fever had symptoms like high temperature, joint pain, rash and eye pain for serotype 1. He said that symptoms of dengue serotype 1 were generally not serious and a patient suffering from it normally could recover by himself. However, hospitalisation might be required for serious cases. He further said that it was important for patients to provide information, such as whether they had mosquito-bites or had travelled outside Hong Kong recently, to their doctors. He advised that the problem in the control of dengue fever was that a patient who had contracted the disease might not be aware of it especially during the incubation period. There was a high risk of transmitting the disease if the patient was bitten by a mosquito and if the mosquito bit another person. In response to Ms HO, DD(H)(1) said that the incubation period of dengue fever was three to 14 days.

24. Ms Cyd HO further asked whether the Administration would provide a special hotline for enquiries on dengue fever to facilitate the Administration taking faster follow-up actions. DD(FPH) replied that in addition to the FEHD hotline 2868 0000, each of the 20 district offices had provided telephone numbers as shown on the publicity leaflets. A special technical hotline had also been provided to management companies of housing estates for enquiries on anti-mosquito control work.

25. Dr LO Wing-lok pointed out that dengue fever could spread fast and cause burden on the health system in Hong Kong if a large number of people suffered from serious symptoms of the disease. He considered that the Administration should increase public alertness to the risk of dengue fever, and educate the public about the need to prevent and control mosquito breeding. He asked whether there was sufficient manpower for implementing anti-mosquito measures. He also asked whether the Administration had assessed the impact of the large-scale spraying of disinfectant on the environment and residents nearby.

26. AD(O)3 said that some 500 FEHD staff were currently deployed for clearing waste and anti-mosquito work. Where necessary, additional staff would be deployed to carry out the work in any particular district. She added that at present inspections were being conducted to construction sites and areas in vicinity to human residence, including housing estates and schools and piers and ferry terminals. She stressed that the participation and assistance of other departments and members of the public were important in anti-mosquito work. As regards the use of insecticides, Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication) (C(CM)) said that clear guidelines were given to staff on the appropriate amount of insecticides to be sprayed, and the impact of the spraying on the environment should be minimal.

27. The Chairman said that some vacant Government land had very serious problem of accumulation of stagnant water, particularly after heavy rains. He urged FEHD to assist the Lands Department (LD) in tackling the problem. DD(FPH) said that FEHD had been providing assistance to LD in tackling the problem, and the two departments had conducted joint operations to clear grass grown on vacant Government land in the previous week. The Chairman stressed that given the recent

Action

outbreak of dengue fever cases, FEHD should play a proactive approach and conduct inspections to all vacant Government sites without waiting for LD's request for assistance.

28. Referring to the Administration's paper on the 2002 anti-mosquito campaign [LC Paper No. CB(2) 1615/01-02(06)], the Chairman noted that there had been a significant decline in the annual average ovitrap index from 24.1% in 2000 to 12.4% in 2001. He asked why the index had sharply risen in 2002. C(CM) explained that the wet and warm weather in early 2002 was favourable to the breeding of mosquitoes, and the ovitrap index had risen more sharply in March and April 2002 than in the previous two years. He said that the Administration had therefore advanced the commencement of the second phase of 2002 Anti-mosquito campaign from July to end of May, and extended the duration of the campaign by two more weeks. He explained that apart from weather, human factors such as improper disposal of used bottles and containers also accounted for the increase of the ovitrap index.

Adm

29. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide further reports to the Panel on any new developments.

## **II. Consultancy study on the feasibility of developing an offshore fishing industry in Hong Kong**

30. The Chairman welcomed representatives of the deputations to the meeting.

### Views of deputations

*Joint Committee of Hong Kong Fisherman's Organization  
(LC Papers No. CB(2)2789/01-02(01) and CB(2)2853/01-02(01))*

31. Mr PANG Wah-kan said that developing offshore fishing was necessary as it was the only way out for the fishing industry. He further said that the fisheries industries had contributed to Hong Kong's economy, and fresh seafood supply was important to uphold Hong Kong's reputation of gourmet paradise. He informed members that large capital investment was required for offshore fishing, and cited the example of Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung who had invested about \$14 million in building vessels for offshore fishing. Mr CHEUNG had spent 44 days in his first fishing trip in the South China Sea in May 2000, and caught a total of 60 tons of tuna worth of \$1.7 million, making a net profit of \$0.9 million. Mr CHEUNG's second fishing trip had lasted for 47 days with fish catch worth of \$2 million, making a net profit of \$1 million. Mr PANG said that Mr CHEUNG's successful experience showed that it was feasible for Hong Kong fishermen to venture into offshore fishing.

Action

*Hong Kong Fishermen's Association  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)2840/01-02(01))*

32. Mr LEUNG Wai-ying said that whether or not Hong Kong fishermen could succeed in venturing into offshore fishing depended on Government's provision of financial and technical support. He said that the Administration should recognise the important role played by fishing industry in Hong Kong's economy. He appealed to the Administration for financial support to help fishermen upgrade their vessels for offshore fishing.

*The Federation of Fishermen's Co-operative Societies of Southern District, Limited*

33. Mr LAI Muk-kam said that he had no special comments to add.

*The Federation of Fishermen's Co-operative Societies of Shau Kei Wan District, Limited*

34. Mr SIN Mei said that he had no comments to add.

*Hong Kong Fisheries Development Association  
(LC Paper No. CB(2)2840/01-02(02))*

35. Mr CHEUNG Siu-keung said that given the depletion of fisheries resources in the South and East China Seas, it was necessary for Hong Kong fishermen to develop offshore fishing. He said that the consultancy study had rightly pointed out that it was feasible for Hong Kong fishermen to venture into offshore fishing. However, he disagreed to the consultant's view that developing an offshore fishing industry was merely a kind of commercial business activities and therefore fishermen should resolve the financing problem by themselves. He said that Government should be forward-looking and follow the good examples of the Mainland and Taiwan which had provided great support to their fishermen in developing offshore fishing. He stressed that Hong Kong fishermen needed Government's full support in order to venture into offshore fishing.

*The Castle Peak Fishermen's Credit Co-operative Society, Unlimited*

36. Mr PO Siu-yau expressed concurrence with Mr CHEUNG Siu-keung's views and had no other comments to add.

*Joint Association of Fishing Development (HK) Limited*

37. Mr CHEUNG Ko said that because of the declining fisheries resources and the implementation of a fishing moratorium in the South China Sea each year, Hong Kong fishermen had found it increasingly difficult to make a living by fishing. He said that since there were abundant fish stocks in distant waters, Hong Kong fishermen hoped to venture into offshore fishing, and this would also help protect fisheries resources in the South China Sea. He said that Government should assist the fishermen to

Action

upgrade the operations of the fishing industry and enhance its competitiveness, as this would also create employment opportunities.

*Hong Kong and Kowloon Fishermen Association Limited*

38. Mr LAU Kuan-kwai said he concurred with Mr CHEUNG Siu-keung and had no other comments to add.

Discussion

39. Referring to some deputations' remarks about the support and assistance provided by the Mainland and Taiwan to their fishermen in developing offshore fishing, the Chairman requested the deputations to provide more information in this respect. Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung of Joint Committee of Hong Kong Fisherman's Organization said that he had benefitted from the Mainland policy as he had started co-operation with Chinese fisheries companies long time ago. At present, he had two vessels catching tunas in South Pacific Ocean, and had received a grant of \$500,000 from the Mainland Government as subsidies for each vessel. As for Taiwan, Mr CHEUNG said that it had also started developing offshore fishing a long time ago. In the last two to three years, Taiwan had acquired more than 250 ultra-low temperature (ULT) tuna longliners. He believed that Taiwan could not have been so successful in developing offshore fishing if it had regarded this to be merely a commercial business activity. He pointed out that it was not possible for fishermen to apply for mortgage loans from banks for acquisition of ULT longliners.

40. Mr LAM Tsui-wang of Hong Kong Fishermen's Association said that he believed that very few fishermen could make such large capital investments for offshore fishing. He explained that most fishermen did not have any property and could not apply for mortgage loans to finance a huge investment of some \$10 million for acquisition of vessels for offshore fishing. He said that it would be very difficult for them to pursue offshore fishing without Government's support.

41. Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed support for the deputations' view that Government should provide assistance for the fishermen to pursue offshore fishing. Ms CHOY said that Hong Kong had lagged far behind as compared with the Mainland, Taiwan, Japan and Korea which were already rather advanced in offshore fishing. She further said that during her recent visit to Argentina, she had been told that the fishing grounds in Argentina were rich in fisheries resources such as squid and tuna, and that Hong Kong fishermen were welcome to go there to look for opportunities for development. She considered that it was feasible for Hong Kong to develop offshore fishing while paying regard to the recommendations of the United Nations on sustainable development of fisheries resources in the world.

Action

42. Miss CHOY sought the deputations' views on the feasibility of Hong Kong fishermen to venture into the waters in South America for offshore fishing. She also asked for information on the assistance and support provided by Taiwan for their fishermen to develop offshore fishing. Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung of Joint Committee of Hong Kong Fisherman's Organization said that there would be a good prospect for fishing development in South America which had a large population of squids in the sea. However, he pointed out that the capital investment for building a vessel for fishing in the South Atlantic Ocean would be more than \$30 million.

43. Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung further said that tuna fishing was not a new industry, and Japan had been developing it for decades. At present, Japan had about 533 ULT tuna longliners and each of them had an annual production output of not less than US\$1.2 million. Taiwan had about 600 registered ULT tuna longliners and 300 unregistered. Taiwanese fishermen also owned some 40 ULT tuna longliners in the Mainland and some 30 ULT tuna longliners in the Philippines. He said that the success of Taiwan in developing offshore fishing was attributed to the government subsidies to the fishing industry.

44. Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung also drew members' attention to the fact that offshore fishing, especially tuna fishing, was coming under quota control. He said that the number of vessels for catching tunas in the Atlantic had already been frozen and it was not allowed to increase. A quota registration system was also going to be introduced to control the number of vessels for catching tunas in the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. He said that if Hong Kong did not start developing offshore fishing in two to three years' time, it would not have the opportunity to start at all.

45. The Chairman asked whether the Administration had made reference to the experience of the Mainland and Taiwan in the development of offshore fishing. DS(FEH)(Ag) pointed out that it might not be appropriate to make comparison between Hong Kong and Mainland China because of their different circumstances and policies. Nevertheless, she said that the Administration would collect information on the assistance rendered by the Government of Mainland China to the Mainland fishermen and provide the information to the Panel after the meeting. She explained that the Government had all along adopted a free market policy for business and trade developments. Unnecessary market restraints or distortions had been kept to a minimum. She added that the Administration had been supporting local fishermen's attempts in pursuing offshore fishing. For example, the Administration assisted fishermen in liaising with the Mainland or foreign government agencies to gather necessary information on offshore fishing operations, encouraged fishermen to enter into cooperation with fisheries companies outside Hong Kong to pursue offshore fishing, and assisted them to explore such opportunities.

Adm

46. DS(FEH)(Ag) further said that the Administration was of the view that offshore fishing development was by nature no different from other commercial business activities. The Administration did not encourage Hong Kong fishermen to totally rely on public resources to develop offshore fishing. Interested fishermen could consider applying for loans from banks or seek joint venture investments with

Action

foreign or Mainland fishing companies. She said that the Administration had to balance the interests of various industries and sectors in the allocation of public resources. Given the current financial constraints, the Administration had no plan to provide additional financial assistance for offshore fishing.

47. Miss CHOY So-yuk expressed dissatisfaction with the Administration's response. She considered that the Administration's policy on provision of loans to different sectors was inconsistent, for example, there were a Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Loan Fund and a \$5 billion-fund for the development of hi-tech industries. She disagreed that any industries would be adversely affected by Government's provision of subsidies to the fishing industry for developing offshore fishing. Miss CHOY said that the Administration should consider offering financial assistance or discussing with banks for the provision of loans to fishermen for offshore fishing. Miss CHOY was of the view that offshore fishing would generate more economic benefits than many hi-tech industries.

48. Mr WONG Yung-kan declared that he was the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Hong Kong Fisherman's Organization. He criticised that the consultancy study had taken an unduly long time to complete and this had much delayed the development of offshore fishing industry in Hong Kong.

49. Mr WONG Yung-kan further said that Hong Kong fishermen were not asking for grants but loans which would be repaid to Government. He said that in contrast, the Government's of the Mainland and of Taiwan provided grants and subsidies to their fishermen to develop offshore fishing. He said that it was unacceptable that the Administration had no regard to the great difficulties faced by the local fishing industry. He reiterated that there were successful cases of fishermen venturing into offshore fishing and the Administration should provide loans for the development of such operations.

50. The Chairman asked whether the Administration still maintained the view that it would not provide financial assistance or loans to the fishing industry for offshore fishing. He drew the Administration's attention to Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung's remarks that a quota system would shortly be introduced for offshore fishing operations in some places, and Hong Kong might lose out if it was still not ready to venture into offshore fishing.

51. The Chairman suggested that the Administration should re-consider allocating more funds to the Fisheries Development Loan Fund (FDLF) for the purpose of providing low-interest loans to fishermen specifically for developing offshore fishing.

52. DS(FEH)(Ag) advised that at present, applicants for loans of more than \$1 million from FDLF were also required to provide collaterals mostly in the form of property. She said that the consultancy study actually encouraged Hong Kong fishermen to explore cooperation opportunities with fisheries companies outside Hong Kong in developing offshore fishing and these companies might provide funding for such operations. She pointed out that the consultancy study did not recommend

Action

fishermen to immediately acquire ULT longliners, but rather they should enter the offshore fishing business with a modest start. DS(FEH)(Ag) said that having regard to the Government's current financial position and the wide-ranging assistance being provided to the fisheries sector, the Administration was not prepared to accede to Mr WONG's request. However, she added that FDLF loans were available to fishermen subject to their meeting the criteria and availability of funds.

53. The Chairman asked whether it was possible to reserve part of the SME Loan Fund for fishermen to borrow. DS(FEH)(Ag) replied that according to her understanding, the SME Loan Fund was also open to applications by Hong Kong fishermen as SMEs who met the relevant criteria.

54. Mr WONG Yung-kan expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Administration's reply. He disagreed that the Government could not afford to provide loans to fishermen for offshore fishing. He added that the Administration had previously undertaken to allocate more funds to FDLF as and when necessary. He said that it was not possible to modify existing vessels for fishing in Nansha at a cost of \$400,000, as the consultancy report seemed to have suggested. He stressed that navigational safety was important in offshore fishing.

55. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that the surplus/reserve of the Fish Marketing Organisation (FMO) and Vegetable Marketing Organisation (VMO) might be used to provide loans to fishermen for developing offshore fishing. DS(FEH)(Ag) responded that fishermen could already apply for loans from the FMO Loan Fund which provided smaller loans. She pointed out that the consultancy report actually recommended four immediate offshore fishing development options with financial commitments smaller than those which require ULT longliner. She hoped that fishermen would make their investment decision in consideration of, among other factors, their financial capacity.

Adm 56. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested the Bureau to explore the feasibility of having VMO to inject part of their surpluses into the FDLF. DS(FEH)(Ag) agreed to consider Mr CHEUNG's suggestions.

57. Mr CHEUNG Siu-keung of Hong Kong Fisheries Development Association said that some of the representatives of the deputations had been to South Pacific and considered that it was feasible for them to pursue offshore fishing and all they needed was capital for investment. However, he pointed out that the consultant had underestimated the amount of investment required for offshore fishing.

58. Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung of Joint Committee of Hong Kong Fisherman's Organization expressed strong dissatisfaction with the recommendations of the consultancy study, especially the options for immediate development, which in his view were misleading and infeasible. He pointed out that since 1992, some 300 Mainland fishing vessels had ventured into fishing grounds in Palau EEZ and Marshall Islands in view of the declining fisheries resources in South China Sea. However, their experience had proven to be a complete failure. This had revealed

Action

how outdated the consultancy report was. As regards the suggestion of bottom-fish longlining in Nansha, Mr CHEUNG said that Hong Kong fishermen had started fishing in Nansha ever since 1976, and the production value of fish catch was very low. He expressed doubt about the economic benefit of this option.

59. Mr CHEUNG Yee-chung reiterated that the only way out for Hong Kong fishermen was to go for offshore fishing and they needed money capital for this. He stressed that fishermen only asked for loans but not grants, and they would repay Government later.

60. The Chairman advised that the deputations could provide further submissions to the Panel detailing their views and comments on the findings of the consultancy study.

61. The Chairman also asked whether the Administration accepted the findings of the consultancy report or whether it would further discuss with the fishing industry before taking a decision. He advised that the Administration should consider the suggestions of making available the reserve/surplus of FMO and VMO for fishermen to borrow for offshore fishing and the feasibility of expanding FDLF to meet fishermen's needs.

62. DS(FEH)(Ag) responded that AFCD had conducted briefings for the fishing community on the content of the study report. Referring to Mr WONG Yung-kan's comment about the delay of the consultancy study, DS(FEH)(Ag) clarified that the Administration had commissioned the consultancy study in 2000 instead of 1999.

63. DS(FEH)(Ag) further said that the Administration considered that the approach and the findings of the study were basically acceptable. She said that the economic benefit of the recommended options would depend on many factors such as logistic support, marketing, etc. She pointed out that the report had recommended that a business approach in lieu of the traditional family-based operation should be adopted in pursuing offshore fishing.

64. On financial assistance to fishermen, DS(FEH)(Ag) said that the Administration had no plan to inject more funds into FDLF. However, she undertook that the Administration would explore the feasibility of making available the reserve/surplus of VMO for injection into FDLF to meet for fishermen's demand.

65. The Chairman said that to facilitate the Panel to follow up the subject, the Administration should provide a report on its discussions with the fishing industry and on the feasibility of making use of the reserve/surplus of FMO and VMO to provide loans to fishermen for building new vessels for offshore fishing. He said that the Panel would follow up this subject. The Administration agreed.

Adm

Action

**III. Importation of chilled chickens from the Mainland**

66. The Chairman welcomed the representatives of the deputations to the meeting.

Presentation of views by deputations

*Consumer Council*

*(LC Paper No. CB(2)2840/01-02(03))*

67. Mrs CHAN WONG Shui said that the Consumer Council supported the Administration's proposed inspection and quarantine requirements and arrangements for chilled chickens imported into Hong Kong from the Mainland. She said that the Consumer Council noted the concern of the local farming industry and traders of live chickens that some retailers might pose chilled chickens as freshly slaughtered chickens for sale. To resolve the problem, the Consumer Council considered that it was most important to have clear indications on the type of poultry (frozen, chilled or fresh) by way of labelling on the product and by proper display of information on the shelves at retail outlets. In this connection, the Consumer Council suggested requiring the inclusion of the "place of slaughter" on the labels of chilled chickens. Mrs CHAN pointed out that section 7 of the Trade Description Ordinance made it an offence for a person who, in the course of trade or business, applied a false trade description to any goods.

68. As regards whether the heads and claws, or the chin, of chilled chickens should be removed to facilitate identification of chilled chickens, Mrs CHAN said that this should be sorted out between the industry and the Administration. She further said that consumers used to pay tribute to the deity and ancestors with a whole chicken (i.e. head, feet or chins intact). As some consumers might not be able to afford to buy fresh chickens, their need for a whole chicken for such use should be taken into account when considering ways to differentiate chilled chickens from fresh chickens.

69. Mrs CHAN said that the Consumer Council also urged the Administration to enhance intelligence and strengthen enforcement on breaches of the new licensing conditions and requirements introduced for the sale of chilled chickens.

*Kowloon Poultry Transporter and Poulterer Association*

*(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2855/01-02(05))*

70. Mr WONG Tak-leung expressed concern about the possibility of the security holograms of Mainland's chilled chickens being removed by unscrupulous traders. He said that such traders aimed to deceive their customers, such as restaurant operators, who actually ordered for freshly slaughtered chickens. The security holograms might be re-used for chilled chickens smuggled from illegal slaughterhouses. He further said that in the absence of a central delivery point for chilled chickens, it would be difficult for the Administration to prevent traders from importing more chilled chickens than they declared, and the chickens in excess might come from illegal slaughterhouses. He urged that every consignment of chilled

Action

chickens imported into Hong Kong should be detained for examination. He also expressed concern about the sale of chilled chickens after expiry of the “use by” date.

*Kowloon Poultry Laan Merchants Association*

71. Mr WONG Kam-yiu said that the Mainland should be urged to cancel the export quota control for both live chickens and chilled chickens supplied to Hong Kong, so that traders or laans in Hong Kong could buy live chickens direct from any farm on the Mainland subject to their fulfillment of the relevant quarantine requirements. He said that this measure would help sustain the local live chicken wholesale industry and maintain Hong Kong’s reputation as a food paradise.

*Hong Kong Poultry Wholesalers Association*  
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2855/01-02(02))

72. Mr TSUI Ming-tuen said that the Association was not opposed to importing chilled chickens into Hong Kong from the Mainland. However, it urged that there must be clear identification of chilled chickens to enable consumers to differentiate them from freshly slaughtered chickens. He said that this was necessary to protect the interest of both consumers and the live chicken industry.

73. Mr TSUI said that with the provision of a central delivery point for live chickens since 1997, the Administration had successfully stamped out the smuggling of live chickens into Hong Kong. He considered that the Administration should also provide a central delivery point for chilled chickens to prevent smuggling, and to ensure that all chilled chickens complied with the relevant quarantine and labelling requirements.

*Hong Kong Livestock Industry Association*

74. Mr NG Po-wing said that most people only used fresh chickens, but not chilled chickens, for paying tribute to the deity and ancestors. He expressed support for imposing a requirement that all chilled chickens should have their heads and claws removed, to facilitate consumers to differentiate chilled chickens from freshly slaughtered chickens. He said that the requirement could prevent any traders or operators of restaurants from posing chilled chickens as fresh chickens for sale or supply to customers.

*Federation of Hong Kong Kowloon New Territories Hawker Associations*

75. Mr FUNG Mun-hong said that the importation of chilled chickens from the Mainland would adversely affect the live chicken trade in Hong Kong. He expressed support for introducing the requirement that all chilled chickens should have their heads and claws removed to facilitate identification and to protect the interest of local live chicken trade.

Action

*Hong Kong and Kowloon Poultry Dealers and Workers Association  
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2851/01-02(02))*

76. Mr WONG Kam-kan said that the Association was opposed to importation of chilled chickens into Hong Kong from the Mainland. He said that all chilled chickens should have their heads and claws removed or their back stamped in order to differentiate them from freshly slaughtered chickens. He also suggested the provision of a central delivery point to be managed by FEHD, Housing Department (HD), Customs and Excise Department and AFCD for handling and inspection of chilled chickens. He also said that the Administration should adopt a more positive approach to assist the chicken industry by improving the hygiene standards of chicken farms, retail markets, and also by improving local chicken breeds.

*The New Territories Chicken Breeders Association Limited  
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2855/01-02(04))*

77. Mr KWAN Wing-kin said that the Association was not opposed to the importation of Mainland chilled chickens into Hong Kong. However, the Association was dissatisfied that the Administration had not taken heed of the views previously expressed by the Association. He was of the view that with the importation of chilled chickens from the Mainland, there would be no room for business operation for the local live chicken trade. He pointed out that that the duck and geese rearers had completely disappeared after the abolition of the export quota for geese and ducks supplied to Hong Kong in 1997.

78. Mr KWAN also expressed doubt that the Administration could effectively enforce the control measures for the sale of chilled chickens at the retail level, as it had failed to impose effective control on the sale of chilled pork. He said that the problems pertinent to the sale of chilled pork had already been featured in the "Hong Kong Collection" produced by Radio Television Hong Kong. Mr KWAN also expressed concern about the proposed arrangement of permitting the sale of fresh and chilled chickens in the same retail premises, as this would easily give rise to the malpractice of posing chilled chickens as freshly slaughtered chickens for sale.

*Hong Kong New Territories Poultry-Culture (Geese & Ducks) Mutual Aid Association  
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2851/01-02(03))*

79. Mr KWOK Chi-yau said that when the export quota for geese and ducks was abolished in 1997, the local poultry trade should have prepared themselves for the cancellation of Mainland's export quota for chilled meat and chickens.

80. Mr KWOK urged the Administration to provide detailed information on the locations of the registered chicken farms and processing plants which would be supplying chilled chickens to Hong Kong, as well as the transportation arrangements for delivery of the chickens. He said that the information was necessary to enable the trade to make the necessary arrangements for the importation of chilled chickens as soon as possible.

Action

*Quality Broiler Development Association*

81. Mr CHAN Yu-yuk said that he had learnt that the Mainland authorities would impose uniform, stringent requirements on the rearing, slaughtering and transport of chilled chickens for export to Hong Kong. He said that the Mainland had all along adopted a high standard in the management of poultry products. He expressed concern that the new inspection and quarantine arrangements and other control measures would add burden to the relevant trades. He added that it was the smuggling of chilled poultry to Hong Kong from the Mainland that had given rise to the recurrence of avian influenza here. In this connection, he urged the Administration to review the effectiveness of its enforcement against illegal importation of chilled poultry.

*Poultry Trade Workers Union*  
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2840/01-02(04))

82. Mr CHAN Pak-tong said that the local chicken trade was very concerned that the importation of chilled chickens would lead to a reduction of jobs in the industry. He said that the relaxation of importation of chilled chickens into Hong Kong was contradictory to the policy of boosting the local community economy. He added that the local chicken industry would be adversely affected and there would be more unemployment.

83. Mr CHAN said that chickens' secretions in their tracheas would easily give rise to bacteria and germs. He suggested that the all imported chilled chickens therefore should have their heads and necks removed before being imported into Hong Kong, and that chilled chickens should not be sold at the same premises where freshly slaughtered chickens were sold. He also warned that if consumers were allowed to choose chilled chickens to buy, the chickens would have to be taken out from refrigerators several times a day and they would easily go bad.

*World's Poultry Science Association Hong Kong Branch*  
(LC Paper No. CB(2) 2789/01-02(05))

84. Mr Peter WONG Chun-kow said that diseases suffered by a chicken would affect its head and trachea. He was worried that if the heads were not removed, the disease carried by chickens in their tracheas might spread to others during the water chilling process when all the chickens were soaked in the water of the same chilling tank. He said that the overseas practice was that when chilled chickens were mass produced, the chickens would first have their heads and tracheas removed to prevent cross-contamination in the chilling process. Mr WONG further said that he had enquired with the United States Department of Agriculture, and received a reply from a microbiologist of the Department advising that it was not the normal method for the heads and tracheas of chilled chickens to be retained during the production process. Mr WONG said that he would seek the microbiologist's consent for the letter to be circulated to Panel members.

Action

85. Mr WONG said that to protect consumers' interest, the labels on the packages of chilled chickens should include "date of slaughter", because labels of animal feed packages were also required to show the production date. He also suggested that the amount of water absorbed by a chilled chicken after the chilling process should be shown on the labels.

*Preparatory Committee of Hong Kong Chilled Poultry Trade*

86. Mr KWOK Shi-hing said that to allay the trade's concern, the Administration should consider requiring chilled poultry and live chickens to be sold at different premises to facilitate customers to differentiate between the two types of poultry. He considered that the previous outbreaks of avian influenza in Hong Kong were not caused by chilled poultry but by live chickens stacked up in local farms and stores. He suggested that each fresh chicken should be required to have an identification tag on their feet showing the farm from which it came.

*Hong Kong Poultry Wholesalers And Retailers Association*

87. Mr Steven WONG said that he shared the views of other deputations. Mr POON Fook-loi said that the Association had not adequately consulted the trade, and had not fully assessed the impact on the trade, before introducing the arrangements on the importation of Mainland chilled chickens into Hong Kong. He considered that it was very difficult to differentiate between chilled, fresh and frozen chickens merely based on their external characteristics. He said that the local live chicken industry demanded that all chilled chickens should have their heads and claws/chins removed to facilitate differentiation by customers.

Discussion

88. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that it was difficult for consumers and enforcement officers to differentiate between chilled and fresh chickens put on sale at market stalls, unless mandatory requirements were introduced to facilitate differentiation. He requested the Administration to consider the suggestions and concerns raised by the deputations, including -

- (a) providing a central delivery point for chilled chickens imported into Hong Kong from the Mainland;
- (b) obtaining information from experts in other countries whether the water chilling process would give rise to contamination of chickens if they were all soaked in the water of the same chilling tank; and
- (c) introducing more stringent penalty to deter traders from repeatedly breaching the relevant requirements and conditions for the sale of chilled meat and poultry.

Action

89. Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (DFEH) said that he had already undertaken at the previous Panel meeting to convey the trade's suggestions (such as removing the heads and claws, or chins, of the chilled chickens) to the exporters. He reiterated that it was possible to differentiate between chilled and fresh chickens by their external characteristics. He said that the local live chicken trade should not over-worry about the unscrupulous practice of posing chilled chickens for sale as freshly-slaughtered chickens. In this connection, the Administration would consider strengthening enforcement efforts and enhancing publicity about the differences in external characteristics of chilled and fresh chickens. He added that the Administration would consider the suggestion of imposing more stringent penalty, including revocation of licence, for breaches of the relevant requirements and conditions. He suggested that the local live chicken industry might develop new local brand names for their live chickens and attach labels to their chickens for identification purpose.

90. Dr LO Wing-lok asked whether there would be disinfection requirements to prevent contamination of chickens during the water chilling process. He also asked whether any disinfectant added to the water would be required to be shown on the labels of the packages of chilled chickens.

91. Assistant Director (Food Surveillance & Control) (AD(FSC)) said that to ensure the hygiene standards of the water chilling process, the chilling tanks would operate with a counter-current system which could prevent contamination. In addition, the temperature of the water was required to be from 0°C to 4°C. At this temperature, all micro-organisms would either die or their reproductive activity would be reduced to almost zero. The Administration also required that the water in the chilling tank should contain a certain concentration of chlorine for disinfection. However, it was not the established international requirement for the disinfectant used to be shown on the package label.

92. AD(FSC) further explained that under the proposed arrangement for importation of chilled chickens from the Mainland, all such chickens must come from chicken farms and processing plants which were registered with the Mainland's inspection and quarantine authority. There should be a trained veterinary surgeon in each of the farm responsible for the prevention and management of disease among chickens. Moreover, live chickens awaiting slaughtering would be stopped feeding for a certain period of time so that there would not be food residues in their guts, in order to prevent cross-contamination during the slaughtering process. In addition, processing plants were required to use advanced equipment to ensure that the intestines would not be opened up when the carcasses were opened up. In the unlikely event that the intestines were broken, the relevant production line would be suspended until everything was cleared.

93. Dr LO Wing-lok said that many countries had imposed the requirement that imported chilled chickens should have their heads and necks removed. He asked why the Administration had claimed that introducing such a requirement on the import of Mainland's chilled chickens would create a trade barrier. He pointed out that in

Action

the United States and Britain, the imported chilled chickens all had their heads and necks removed. He suggested the Administration should find out if such practice was actually a mandatory requirement under their food regulations based on health considerations.

94. AD(FSC) said that the World Trade Organization (WTO) had a definition of "trade barrier". On matters relating to food, WTO made reference to the food safety and hygiene standards laid down by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC). AD(FSC) said that the Committee on meat and poultry hygiene of CAC had held its last meeting in February 2002, and it had not changed its view that chilled or frozen chickens for export needed not have their heads and necks removed. AD(FSC) said that Hong Kong had to abide by the WTO standards in setting requirements for the import of chilled chickens from the Mainland.

95. The Chairman asked about the Administration's position on the suggestions of the deputations and the Consumer Council concerning inclusion of "place of slaughter" and "date of slaughter" on the labels. The Chairman said that inclusion of the date and place of slaughter on the labels would provide useful information to consumers and the Administration should consider the suggestion. Mr WONG Yung-kan agreed with the Chairman.

96. AD(FSC) replied that in future, the health certificate of each consignment of the chilled chickens would contain information on the place and date of slaughter. She said that according to the CAC, it was only necessary for the labels of perishable goods, such as chilled poultry, to contain the "use-by date" but not the date of slaughter. DFEH advised that if members really wanted such information to be included on the labels, the Administration would convey the request to the Mainland authorities for consideration.

Adm

97. Mrs CHAN WONG Shui of the Consumer Council said that removal of heads and claws of chilled chickens could not help consumers to differentiate chilled chickens from frozen chickens. She said that the suggestion would affect consumers who wanted to buy chilled chickens for paying tribute to the deity and ancestors as traditionally a whole chicken was used.

98. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he was concerned about the impact of the importation of chilled chickens from the Mainland on the business of the local live chicken trade. He supported introducing measures to facilitate differentiation of chilled chickens by customers, and to prevent traders who supplied chickens to restaurants from substituting freshly slaughtered chickens with chilled chickens by removing their packages and security holograms.

99. DFEH said that many of the issues raised by the deputations at the meeting were not new and had been considered by the Administration. He reiterated that the Administration did not find any scientific evidence to support that there should be a health requirement that all chilled chickens should have the heads and necks removed. He added that in some overseas countries, the removal of heads and claws of chickens

Action

were probably based on business considerations, as such parts were not consumed by people in those countries, and they also did not have the tradition of using a whole chicken for paying tribute to the deity and ancestors.

100. Mr Tommy CHEUNG requested the Administration to consider the trade's suggestion of providing a central delivery point for chilled chickens and lifting the import quota control for live chickens. He said that the Administration had not adequately consulted the relevant trades and the Administration should postpone the importation of Mainland chilled chickens until it had sorted out the problems and concerns raised by the trade and Panel members.

101. As regards the suggestion of providing a central delivery point for chilled chickens, DFEH said that the Administration considered that the provision of such a central delivery facility would not help prevent smuggling of chilled chickens nor would it bring about any real benefits. There was also concern about the impact on the operating costs of the trade which would be reflected in the retail price of chilled chickens.

102. DFEH further said that the Administration had been in discussion with the chicken industry for months and the arguments put forward at this meeting had been raised previously. He considered that unless there were new issues raised, the importation arrangements should not be postponed.

103. Mr WONG Yung-kan suggested that the Administration should provide information as to whether the Mainland chilled chickens for export to other countries such as Japan, were required to have the heads removed.

104. DFEH said that the Administration was no less concerned about the hygiene standards of imported chilled chickens. He pointed out that at present some European countries also exported chilled chickens to Hong Kong. For example, the French chilled chickens imported into Hong Kong still had their heads retained.

105. The Chairman concluded that the Panel was generally not opposed to the importation of chilled chickens from the Mainland. He pointed out that members were of the view that the importation should commence only after detailed consultation with the trade. He said that the trade and consumers were most concerned about the measures to be introduced for differentiation between fresh and chilled chickens. He asked the Administration to further examine the arguments raised at this meeting that it would constitute a health risk to have imported chilled chickens' heads and necks retained. He also requested the Administration to provide the following information –

- (a) to confirm whether the United States and Britain had imposed a sanitary requirement that chilled chickens must have the heads and necks removed; and

Action

- (b) whether Mainland's chilled poultry exported to other places had the heads/necks removed.

Adm DFEH agreed.

106. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:10 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
4 November 2002