

**16 September 2002
For Information**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Import of Chilled Chicken from the Mainland

Purpose

This paper sets out:

- the inspection and quarantine requirements and arrangements for chilled chickens imported to Hong Kong from the Mainland; and
- the licensing requirements for regulating the sale of chilled chicken at retail outlets in Hong Kong.

Background

2. Chilled chickens from the Mainland had been exported to Hong Kong since the 1980s till the end of 1997, but the export was stopped in early 1998 until now. The Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) announced on 1 January 2002 that chilled chickens will be imported to Hong Kong again and the quota and sole agent systems on chilled chickens and meat as well as frozen chickens and meat will also be abolished. Some local importers show interest in importing chilled chickens right after the announcement. Since the current inspection and quarantine requirements for poultry are different from those in early 1998, we will subject Mainland chilled chickens to inspection and quarantine procedures for products from a new source or new products to ensure that Mainland chilled chickens meet our food safety and sanitary standard, despite the fact that the Mainland is not a new source of chilled chickens and chilled chickens are not a new line of product. To this end, we have held several rounds of discussion with the State General Administration for Quality Supervision and Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) since early this year. A consensus on the inspection and quarantine requirements has now been reached for the chilled chickens imported from the Mainland.

Inspection and Quarantine Requirements and Arrangements for Chilled Chicken Imported from the Mainland

3. The Administration has all along had an effective mechanism for controlling the import of game, meat and poultry in place. This control system follows international practices and standards and is based on risk assessment. Under the Imported Game, Meat and Poultry Regulations of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), all imported game, meat and poultry must be accompanied by an official health certificate issued by a competent authority recognized by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene. The official health certificate should certify that the game, meat or poultry it accompanies is fit for human consumption.

4. Whenever there is a potential new source of imported game, meat or poultry, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) will assess the following information of the exporting territory before considering whether to allow the import of such game, meat and poultry in the form of trial shipments-

- (a) the legislation governing the hygiene standards of the game, meat or poultry;
- (b) the animal disease situation;
- (c) the qualifications of the veterinarians and whether their qualifications are internationally recognised;
- (d) the qualifications of the quarantine inspection personnel and whether their qualifications are internationally recognised;
- (e) the facilities and hygiene standards of the farms where the livestock is raised;
- (f) the facilities and hygiene standards of the slaughterhouses; and
- (g) the facilities (including storage and delivery facilities) and hygiene standards of the processing plants.

5. FEHD will follow the above assessment procedures when handling the imported chilled chickens from the Mainland. After going through the assessment procedures, chilled chickens can be imported into Hong Kong in the form of trial shipments. To ensure food safety and public hygiene, FEHD will detain for examination the first three consignments of chilled chicken imported into Hong Kong. Such consignments can only be released to the market for sale after the testing results are confirmed to be satisfactory. If FEHD is satisfied with the first three consignments, each of the subsequent three consignments will be sampled for testing although they can be released for sale before the final testing results are available. Subsequent consignments from the Mainland will be put under the regular food surveillance system if FEHD is satisfied with the test results of the first six consignments. Samples will be taken at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing on a random basis under the food surveillance programme. If any of the testing results is found to be unsatisfactory, FEHD may request the concerned authority to stop the export of chilled chickens from the related processing plant to Hong Kong and ask the authority to conduct a comprehensive investigation and submit a report to FEHD. FEHD will only allow the import of chilled chickens from that processing plant to resume when the concerned authority has identified the cause of the problem and taken remedial measures to the satisfaction of FEHD.

6. Mainland's export chicken farms and processing plants must register with the Mainland's inspection and quarantine authority. Since a vertical line of management is applied throughout the Mainland's inspection and quarantine authority over food exports, uniform requirements are imposed on such export farms nationwide in the Mainland. Chilled chickens for export to Hong Kong must come from such farms. FEHD will follow the international practice and its established mode of operation to ensure the health of live chickens and food safety by conducting inspections of some export farms. To ensure that the facilities and hygiene standards of plants processing chilled chickens comply with our requirements, a consensus has also been reached with AQSIQ that only processing plants with the prior approval of FEHD can export chilled chickens to Hong Kong. This requirement applies equally to other countries exporting chilled chickens to Hong Kong. Over the past few months, FEHD has started to inspect the registered processing plants which intend to export chilled chickens to Hong Kong.

7. For details of the requirements for the sources, processing, packaging, labelling and transportation of chilled chicken imported from Mainland, please see **Annex 1**.

Licensing Requirements for Regulating the Sale of Chilled Chicken at Retail Outlets in Hong Kong

8. Chilled chickens can be sold in any fresh provision shop or FEHD market stall with permission from FEHD for selling chilled chickens. To ensure that chilled chickens are sold under proper and hygienic conditions by traders, FEHD plans to include appropriate licensing requirements/tenancy conditions in the licenses of the fresh provision shops and the tenancy of the market stalls. For details, please see **Annex 2**. These requirements/conditions will take effect six weeks after FEHD officially notifies the licensees and tenants of the requirements/conditions.

Identification and Tracing System for Chilled Chicken

9. A label with a security hologram printed with the letters “CIQ” will be stuck onto each chilled chicken imported from the Mainland to show that the chicken has been approved for export to Hong Kong by the Mainland’s inspection and quarantine authority. A specially allocated number will be printed on the back of each hologram label for identifying in which processing plant and when the chilled chicken is processed. The labels will allow consumers to determine whether the chilled chickens they purchased have been inspected and are imported through legal means. This arrangement will also help combat smuggling of chilled chickens. Furthermore, in case of any food incident involving Mainland chilled chickens, the number on the hologram label will facilitate both the local and the Mainland’s inspection and quarantine authorities to trace the processing plant and the farm from where the chilled chicken came from and take appropriate control measures.

Timetable for the Import of Chilled Chicken

10. The local farming industry and traders of live chickens are concerned that some live chicken retailers may pose chilled chickens as

freshly slaughtered chickens for sale. In fact, consumers can cast doubt on whether the chickens they have purchased are freshly slaughtered from some external characteristics of slaughtered chickens such as –

(a) Clarity of the chicken's eyes

For chickens that are freshly slaughtered, their eyes should remain clear.

(b) colour of the cut at throat

For chickens that are freshly slaughtered, the colour of the cut at throat is bright red; whereas the colour is mostly deep red for chilled chickens as they have been slaughtered for a certain period and processed through chilling procedures; and

(c) temperature of the carcass

The chickens that are freshly slaughtered should still be warm after slaughtering. In general, the temperature of chilled chickens is lower than that of freshly slaughtered chickens under room temperature.

FEHD officers will enhance inspection of stalls/shops selling live chickens and enhance collection of intelligence to combat against any breaches of the licensing requirements/tenancy conditions regarding storage and display of chilled chickens. Where necessary, blitz operations will be conducted. According to the licensing requirements/tenancy conditions, distributors must keep records showing the names and addresses of their clients and the quantities sold to each client least 60 days for inspection. Retailers are also required to keep invoices showing the dates, description, quantities, names and address of the sources of their supply for 60 days.

Timetable for importing chilled chickens to Hong Kong

11. We expect that it will take about two months to complete the first-round approval of the Mainland processing plants, applications from potential importers for import and installation of refrigerators and other preparation work done by the fresh provision shops and market stalls

under the new licensing requirements/ tenancy conditions. Chilled chickens will then be imported to Hong Kong.

Support to the local chicken rearing industry

12. We will closely monitor the quantities of imported chilled chickens in future and their impact on the local chicken rearing industry. AFCD will also provide technical support to help the farmers adapt to market changes, such as

- (a) conducting joint study on improving local chicken breeds (e.g. “Kamei” Chicken) with experts in academic field in order to enhance the competitiveness of local live chickens in the market;
- (b) setting up a working group so as to establish and promote local brands of good quality chickens (e.g. “Kamei” Chicken). The working group comprises professors who conduct joint study to improve local chicken breeds and people from the business sector; and
- (c) enhancing the capability of local chicken farms to prevent and control poultry diseases and upgrading the productivity of local farms.

**Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
September 2002**

**Inspection and Quarantine Requirements
for Chilled Chickens Imported from the Mainland**

- I. Poultry farms
 1. All live chickens supplied to processing plants for the production of chilled chickens to be exported to Hong Kong should come from poultry farms registered with the State General Administration for Quality Supervision and Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) or the State Administration for Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine (CIQ) of the People's Republic of China.
 2. There should be a trained veterinary surgeon who has passed the required examination and whose name has been kept on record by CIQ in each poultry farm for the prevention and management of disease among chickens.
 3. The poultry farm should have no occurrence of highly pathogenic avian influenza during the six months before the live chickens are delivered out of the farm for sale.
 4. The entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities should closely control the residues of veterinary drugs and pesticides in poultry in accordance with the relevant requirements in Hong Kong.
 5. Like the live chickens supplied to Hong Kong, those sent to processing plants should come from poultry farms with no incidents of highly pathogenic avian influenza or Newcastle disease in the past 180 days and should be segregated for 5 days and have passed the testing on H5 avian flu before delivery.
 6. Live chickens that meet the inspection and quarantine requirements will be issued with relevant certificates or documents by an official veterinarian of the entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities. The chickens should arrive at the slaughterhouses within 3 days after certification.

II. Processing plants

1. The slaughtering and processing of chickens should be carried out in slaughtering and processing plants registered with the China National Regulatory Commission for Certification and Accreditation (CNCA) and approved to export chickens to Hong Kong.
2. Live chickens awaiting slaughtering should be completely segregated from the processing and storage area of chilled chickens inside the processing plants.
3. On the arrival of the live chickens at the plant, the resident veterinarian of the processing plant should check the relevant certificates or documents issued by the entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities and conduct ante-mortem inspection on the live chickens.
4. During the processing procedures, sufficient space should be given to the chickens to prevent contacts and cross-contamination.
5. Piercing of the offal during the dressing of chickens should be avoided. Tools for dressing the chickens should be cleaned each time after use. The carcasses and offal of the chickens should never be in contact again after the chickens have been dressed.
6. After the chickens have been slaughtered, the resident veterinarian will conduct post-mortem inspections under CIQ's supervision to ensure that the chickens are suitable for human consumption.
7. The carcasses and offal should undergo the process of primary chilling after they have been separately processed and cleaned. The carcasses should be chilled to the temperature of 8° C or below within 6 hours after slaughtering. Within the first 12 hours after slaughtering, the temperature should drop to 4° C or below and remain at a level not higher than 4° C. The offal should be chilled to the temperature of 4° C or below within 2 hours after slaughtering and the temperature should remain at a level of not higher than 4° C afterwards.
8. In case of an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza in the Mainland, the processing plants within the infected area should suspend the export of chilled chickens and offal to Hong Kong.

III. Packaging

1. All containers, packaging materials, ice cubes, dry ice, etc. which might be in contact with the chilled chickens and offal should be kept clean, hygienic and in good condition.
2. The carcasses and offal of chilled chickens should be packaged separately and sealed. Carcasses in whole should be packaged individually while carcasses in pieces or the offal can be packaged either individually or in groups. The packaging should be done in an environment of 15° C or below.
3. Packaged chilled chickens and offal should have a firmly attached label that clearly indicates the health registration number of the relevant export processing plant and the following main information:
 - (1) Commodity name—chilled chicken, the type of offal or the brand name in full;
 - (2) In case different types of chilled chicken pieces or offal are packed together, the ingredients should be listed in descending order by weight. (Note: lists of ingredients are not required for individually packed chilled chickens and packages containing only one type of chilled chicken pieces or offal.)
 - (3) The label “USE BY ___DATE___MONTH___YEAR/此日期前食用___年___月___日” (note: in both Chinese and English) should appear on the package;
 - (4) Quantity and weight of the chilled chicken or offal;
 - (5) Name and address of the processing plant or packer; and
 - (6) Instruction for storage or use.

IV. Transportation

1. Conditions to be adhered to in the transportation of chilled chickens and offal by goods vehicles:
 - (1) A goods vehicle which transports chilled chickens and offal should have an enclosed-type conveying compartment and refrigerating devices that maintain a chilling temperature between

0 °C – 4 °C. The temperature should in no circumstances exceed 8 °C.

- (2) The internal surfaces of the conveying compartment of the vehicle should be smooth and impervious so that cleansing can be carried out easily.
 - (3) Metal or plastic containers should be provided inside the conveying compartment of the vehicle for separate storage of chilled chickens and offal during transportation.
 - (4) The vehicle should have temperature measuring devices that constantly record the temperatures of the conveying compartment on a running graph during the trip.
 - (5) A temperature gauge should be located outside the vehicle so that the driver can readily monitor the temperature inside the conveying compartment.
2. Requirements to be complied with when transporting chilled chickens and offal by vehicles:
- (1) The conveying compartment of the vehicle should be kept clean and free from waste and contaminants and should be cleansed and disinfected before loading and after unloading.
 - (2) The conveying compartment of the vehicle should only be used for transporting chilled chickens and offal and should not be used for transporting any other goods simultaneously.
 - (3) Chilled chickens and offal stored in the conveying compartment of the vehicle should be kept at a chilling temperature between 0 °C – 4 °C. The temperature should in no circumstances exceed 8 °C. The storage method should be able to ensure the cleanliness of the chilled chickens and offal.
 - (4) All doors and windows of the conveying compartment of the vehicle should be properly closed except when loading and unloading chilled chickens and offal. The chilling devices of the conveying compartment should be kept functioning at all times when the compartment is loaded.

- (5) No person should be allowed to enter the conveying compartment of the vehicle except for the purpose of loading and unloading of the chilled chickens and offal or for the cleansing, disinfection and maintenance of the conveying compartment.
 - (6) The refrigerating devices and the temperature gauges of the conveying compartment of the vehicle should be kept in good working conditions at all times.
3. Conditions to be adhered to in the transportation of chilled chickens and offal by sea:
 - (1) Chilled chickens and offal should be stored in sealed refrigerators and kept at a chilling temperature between 0 °C – 4 °C. The temperature should in no circumstances exceed 8 °C.
 - (2) The internal surfaces of the refrigerators should be smooth and impervious so that cleansing can be carried out easily.
 - (3) The refrigerators should have temperature recording devices or other independent thermometers with similar functions which constantly record the temperatures of the conveying compartment on a running graph during the trips.
4. Requirements to be complied with when transporting chilled chickens and offal by sea:
 - (1) The refrigerators should be kept clean and free from waste and contaminants. Refrigerators storing chilled chickens and offal should be cleansed and disinfected before loading and after unloading.
 - (2) Chilling devices and thermometers or other independent thermometers in refrigerators should be kept in good working condition at all times.
5. Conditions to be adhered to in the transportation of chilled chickens and offal by air:
 - (1) Chilled chickens and offal should be stored in appropriate containers and kept at a temperature between 0 °C – 4 °C. The temperature should in no circumstances exceed 8 °C.

- (2) All containers , dry ice and chilling materials (possibly be in contact with the chilled chickens and offal) should be kept in good hygienic condition.
6. Requirements to be complied with when transporting chilled chickens and offal by air:
 - (1) Containers storing chilled chickens and offal should be cleansed and disinfected before loading.
 - (2) Containers should be kept intact.

V. Health Certificates

1. Each consignment of products should be accompanied by a health certificate issued by the official veterinary surgeon of the entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities.
2. The health certificate should specify:
 - (1) “Chilled” products;
 - (2) Name of the export enterprise;
 - (3) Name, address and registration number of the processing plant;
 - (4) Date of production;
 - (5) Date of dispatch;
 - (6) Registration number of the poultry farm that produced this consignment of chilled products.

Draft Additional Licensing/Tenancy Conditions for Sale of Chilled Poultry at Retail Outlets

1. Invoices showing the dates, descriptions, quantities, names and addresses of sources of supply of fresh or imported chilled poultry should be kept for at least 60 days and be readily available for inspection and for making copies upon the request of the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene at all times.
2. Records of bulk sale and wholesale (not applicable to FEHD market stalls) should be kept. The records should show the dates, descriptions and the quantities of the fresh or imported chilled poultry sold in bulk, and names and addresses of the purchasers. Such records should be kept for at least 60 days and be readily available for inspection and for making copies upon the request of the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene at all times.

(Note: For the purpose of this condition, the term “bulk sale” means sale of goods in large quantities to another person who does not buy the goods for resale in the same form as they are purchased while the term “wholesale” refers to the sale of goods in large quantities to another person who buys the goods for resale in the same form as they are purchased.)

3. Imported chilled poultry should be pre-packed, and in accordance with the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap. 132 Sub. Leg.), be labeled. They should be sold in the original and intact pre-packed form without being contaminated or tampered with.
4. All chilled poultry should be kept at all times at a chilling temperature between 0 °C and 4 °C, and in no circumstances exceeding 8 °C. They should be sold direct from refrigerator(s) to customers. This temperature requirement applies to any parts of the poultry.
5. Refrigerator(s) should not be overloaded. Chilled commodities should not be placed in such a way that cold air outlets are obstructed. Adequate spaces for good air circulation should be provided within the refrigerator(s).
6. Legible notices rectangular in shape with sides of at least 30 centimetres in length and at least 20 centimetres in width printed with legible English letters “Imported Chilled Poultry for Sale” and legible Chinese words “本店有售進口冰鮮家禽” should be displayed at all times conspicuously at the premises and at the refrigerator(s) for the display for sale of such commodities. Please refer to the sample as per attached.
7. Should any business involving the distribution of imported chilled poultry carcasses and offal to other retail outlets be conducted at the premises, a goods vehicle or other means approved in writing by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene should be used for the delivery of imported chilled poultry carcasses and offal.
8. A refrigerator of suitable capacity should be provided for the storage or display for sale of dressed poultry carcasses and their offal at a temperature between 0 °C and 4 °C, and in no circumstances exceeding 8 °C.

Imported Chilled Poultry for Sale

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