

**16 September 2002
For Information**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Response to the trade's views on the Import of Chilled Chickens from the Mainland

Background

Deputations from the trade gave their views on a number of issues at the special meeting of the Panel held on 1 February 2002. Our responses to the views concerning the inspection and quarantine requirements, transportation and retail of Mainland chilled chickens are set out below.

Views 1, 2, 3, 5, 9

The inspection and quarantine requirements for chilled chickens imported from the Mainland

2. Please see Paragraph 3-7 in “LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene - Import of Chilled Chickens from the Mainland”.

Views 6, 12

Separate stalls/shops for the sale of chilled poultry and live chickens and enhancing inspection of stalls/shops

3. From the perspective of consumer protection, separate stalls/shops for the sale of chilled chickens and live chickens cannot help avoid the malpractice of posing chilled chickens as freshly slaughtered chickens for sale. FEHD officers will enhance inspection of stalls/shops selling live chickens, collection of intelligence and conduct blitz

operations at early mornings or other time in order to prevent any illegal traders from using improper ways of storage and display of chilled chickens for sale. Consumers can also distinguish from the external characteristics of slaughtered chickens to determine whether the chickens are freshly slaughtered or not. Please refer to the tenth Paragraph of the paper on “LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environment Hygiene – Import of Chilled Chickens from the Mainland” for details.

Views 7

All chilled poultry should be delivered to a designated wholesale market for inspection

4. From the perspective of food surveillance, FEHD has checking points at the landing ports of chilled food products and conducts immediate inspection of the products at those checking points. The inspection needs not to be done after the consignments reach a wholesale market. From the perspective of combating illegal import, designating a wholesale market for inspection is not an effective means to tackle the problem either.

View 8

The definition of “New Source”

5. In the control of the import of game, meat and poultry, “new source” refers to a new place of origin or a new category of products. The Mainland’s chilled chickens do not come from a new source and are not new products. However, as Hong Kong’s current inspection and quarantine requirements on chilled chickens are different from those in early 1998, the Mainland’s chilled chickens will be subject to the same examination and inspection procedures as those applied to new places of origin or new products. This is to ensure that the chilled chickens meet the current food safety and hygiene requirements of Hong Kong. Please refer to the second paragraph of the paper on “LegCo Panel on Food

Safety and Environmental Hygiene - Import of Chilled Chickens from the Mainland” for details.

View 10

Removal of chilled chickens’ heads and claws

6. In terms of food safety and public hygiene, chilled chickens’ heads and claws do not constitute a particularly high risk. Moreover, there is no international food safety standard requiring the removal of heads and claws of poultry products. The Government therefore has no scientific grounds to require the removal of chilled chickens’ heads and claws. Overseas processing factories will, in general, process chilled chickens in whole, remove their heads and claws, or chop off different parts of the chickens such as chicken breasts and drumsticks, and pack them separately according to the demand of purchasers. If Hong Kong importers need to import chilled chickens processed in different ways, the Government will not and should not impose restrictions upon them as long as the chilled chickens meet our food safety and public hygiene standards.

View 13

Records on the import of chilled chickens to be kept by importers

7. FEHD has all along required chilled chicken importers to submit the names of the suppliers and to keep bulk sale and wholesale records which should show the dates, descriptions and quantities of the imported chilled chickens sold in bulk, and the names and addresses of the purchasers. These records should be kept for at least 60 days and be readily available for inspection of FEHD staff.

View 14

Stepping up the delivery control on imported chilled chickens

8. Compliance with the delivery and storage conditions on imported chilled poultry has always been a prerequisite for the issue of import permits by FEHD.

View 15

Permitting the import of more species and categories of live poultry from the Mainland

9. According to our understanding, the species and categories of live poultry to be imported are purely determined by market demand and have nothing to do with the Mainland's export quota or the safety and hygiene standards on imported and exported food.

Views 16, 17 and 18

Evaluating the impact of imported chilled chickens on trade

10. The Administration has put in place an effective mechanism for controlling the import of chilled poultry, including chilled chickens. If more chilled chickens are to be imported, we will have to allocate more resources on the monitoring of these commodities. Like other commodities, the quantity of chilled chickens to be imported will be determined by market demand. At this stage, we are not in a position to anticipate the sale volume of chilled chickens to be imported from the Mainland. As such, we cannot estimate the increase of workload in this respect.

11. Hong Kong is a free market. We adopt a free trade policy and impose no quota on the import and export of goods and commodities. Hence, Hong Kong people can have more choices. All foods are

allowed to be imported to Hong Kong so long as they meet and comply with our stringent hygiene requirements. We, however, will closely monitor the quantities of imported chilled chicken in future and their impact on the relevant trades and will explore measures to help the trades adapt to market changes. We will also strive to sustain the development of Hong Kong's agriculture industry through various means. Please refer to the twelfth paragraph of the paper on "LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene - Import of Chilled Chickens from the Mainland" for details.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Health, Wealth and Food Bureau
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