

**For information
on 11 January 2005**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Import of Chilled Pork from Mainland

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the progress for importing chilled pork from the Mainland.

Background

2. The Mainland has always supplied Hong Kong with frozen pork but not chilled pork. Since 2002, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has engaged the Mainland authorities in a step-by-step negotiation over the detailed inspection and quarantine arrangements for various types of meat. Chilled chickens from the Mainland were first imported to Hong Kong at the end of 2002.

3. At present, most of the imported chilled pork came from Thailand, Australia and the United States. Import figures for chilled pork from 2001 to 2003 are as follows -

Statistics on Imported Chilled Pork (Tonnes)			
<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>
Thailand	9 228	11 222	7 792
Australia	228	103	99
United States	20	16	17
<u>Other countries</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>9 476</u>	<u>11 346</u>	<u>7 909</u>

Monitoring System for Imported Chilled Pork

4. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has a monitoring system for imported game, meat and poultry. The system adopts the international practices and standards based on the risk assessment. All places of origin for chilled pork must submit the following information to certify the hygiene standard of their chilled pork and pass through vetting procedures before they are permitted to supply chilled pork to Hong Kong on a trial basis:

- (a) the legislation regulating hygiene standards of meat in the place of origin;
- (b) animal disease situation in the place of origin;
- (c) training, qualification and international recognition of veterinary officers and inspection and quarantine officers;
- (d) facilities and hygiene standards of farms, slaughterhouses and processing plants;
- (e) production process of chilled pork intended for export (including details of both ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection and quarantine procedures, etc.);
- (f) issuing authority and accreditation details of health certificates; and
- (g) monitoring and regulation of veterinary drug residues.

5. Importers who intend to import chilled pork into Hong Kong must obtain import licenses from FEHD beforehand. Every batch of imported chilled pork must be accompanied by a health certificate issued by the authorities in its place of origin to certify that the meat is hygienic and fit for human consumption. When FEHD is satisfied with the inspection results of the first six batches of imported chilled pork, subsequent imports will be subject to monitoring under our regular food surveillance system and thus random testing at the import, wholesale and retail levels. If and when FEHD discovers any chilled pork that fails to meet the requirements for food safety and public health in its tests at any level, it would require the authorities concerned to stop the processing plant involved from exporting chilled pork to Hong Kong, conduct thorough investigation, introduce measures for improvement and to submit a report. Only when FEHD is satisfied with the improvement that the plant has made would it be allowed to resume exporting chilled pork to Hong Kong.

Combating Meat Smuggling

6. At the import level, FEHD works hand in hand with the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) and the Police to combat meat smuggling activities. Besides mounting joint operations at various land boundary control points, the senior management of the two departments hold regular meetings to review, examine and formulate strategic enforcement measures.

Control at Retail Level

7. At the retail level, fresh provision shop (FPS) licensees and public market tenants who sell chilled meat are required to comply with licensing or tenancy conditions issued by FEHD concerning the source, handling, display and storage of chilled meat. In particular, operators are not allowed to display chilled meat for sale as fresh meat. Operators are also required to display a legible notice at a conspicuous location and on refrigerators that imported chilled meat is available for sale at their premises for the information of consumers. FEHD has introduced an additional licensing/tenancy condition to increase the sanction against malpractices since June 2003 - FPS licensees or market tenants selling chilled meat as fresh meat will have their licences cancelled or market tenancy agreements terminated immediately.

Arrangements for Importing Chilled Pork from Mainland

8. FEHD has engaged the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) in the negotiation about setting up a mechanism for importing chilled pork to Hong Kong in early 2004. FEHD visited four chilled pork processing plants and their associated farms in Shandong, Sichuan, Guangdong and Shenzhen respectively in May 2004. FEHD and AQSIQ then proceeded to exchange views on the inspection and quarantine hygiene requirements for chilled pork destined for Hong Kong from June to October 2004.

The Way Forward

9. At his meeting with AQSIQ in early December 2004, the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food reached a consensus with AQSIQ. Experts from both sides would continue the discussion on the inspection and quarantine procedures with a view to finalizing the inspection and quarantine hygiene requirements for chilled pork destined for Hong Kong as soon as possible. In the meantime, AQSIQ would provide a list of processing plants that will be allowed to supply chilled pork to Hong Kong for FEHD to conduct further inspection. The purpose of these visits is to verify the information about the facilities, operation, production process and the hygiene monitoring system of these plants and their associated farms. It is expected that the Mainland can begin to supply chilled pork to Hong Kong in the first quarter of 2005.

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