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LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene **Special Meeting on 20 April 2006**

PARKnSHOP Presentation

Re: Greenpeace test findings of pesticides on vegetables

BACKGROUND

Greenpeace contacted PARKnSHOP in February this year about their results on pesticides tested on samples of vegetables collected at our stores since.

Subsequently we obtained the test results of samples taken by Greenpeace at our stores. We conducted a detailed investigation and this was possible because our supply of Chinese leafy vegetables is all documented under our Farm Check system. The findings include:

- The two samples of tomato found with extremely low levels of pesticides at less than half a part per million. We believe that this is due to environmental contamination primarily from river water used for irrigation down stream from a farm (s) using such pesticides or by wind from adjacent farms.
- The other one vegetable sample, small pak choi, that had a legal pesticide found that was marginally over the Codex limit was due to a minor procedural error - the workers harvested the vegetable two days earlier than required after pesticide applied, and made a mistake in filling the farm record. Corrective action has already been taken at the farm concerned.

SUPPLY OF VEGETABLES AT PARKnSHOP

Vegetables (Chinese and Western) at PARKnSHOP are sourced from over 20 countries, with 81% from the Mainland, 0.5% from Hong Kong (all organic) and the remaining are from countries like Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Japan, Europe and South East Asia.

FOOD SAFETY CONTROL ON VEGETABLES AT PARKSHOP

PARKnSHOP has been the pioneer in Hong Kong with regards to food safety and has implemented a comprehensive food safety system for leafy Chinese vegetables we sell. This category of vegetables was selected based on risk assessment. This program called “**Farm Check**” involves Farm Accreditation and focuses on the control of pesticides, traceability from farm to store and laboratory testing that includes GCMS analysis.

Farm Check was initiated by PARKnSHOP in 2001 to further enhance food safety in our stores. This serves as an additional mechanism to the government’s monitoring system already exists. Every year, up to 72,800 tests are conducted, i.e. up to 200 tests per day.

Every year, PARKnSHOP invest HK\$5 million on food safety in which Farm Check is a major part of the programme. We are the only retailer in Hong Kong investing in such advanced scientific food safety testing capability, and in fact the only retailer in the world to apply this to leafy Chinese vegetables.

With the implementation of Farm Check, PARKnSHOP is putting extra effort and contribution in improving food safety in Chinese leafy vegetables which traditionally showed higher risks in the category, including:

1. We visit farms in the Mainland to select those with the best agricultural practice. They have to achieve our requirements in order to become the Accredited Farms where we get supply of vegetables for our customers.
2. We conduct regular visits and training to Accredited Farms in the Mainland on improved agricultural practice, including reducing the use of pesticides. Since these farms do not supply exclusive to PARKnSHOP, the effort we put in education will benefit other sales points who get supply from these farms.
3. After the vegetables pass the Man Kam To border in the evening where inspection and testing by FEHD is conducted, they will be sent to PARKnSHOP’s vegetable distribution centre for further sample tests.
4. Samples are taken from every leafy Chinese vegetable type from every farm each night; and we conduct a screening test for pesticide residues. The vegetables are then order picked and sent to PARKnSHOP stores around 5am.
5. Any positive test results will be subjected to a complex confirmation test using GCMS technology. Our advanced testing equipment will analyze the sample for any one of the several thousand pesticides in its data base. If a pesticide is confirmed as being present, a further analysis will be conducted to determine the concentration. The result will then be referenced to the International standard (Codex) which is produced by the World Health Organization (WHO)

under the United Nations (UN). If the level of pesticide exceeds the codex standard, we will inform our stores before they open, and the concerned basket(s) of vegetables (each basket is labeled) will not be put on shelves and be returned to our distribution centre.

6. According to our record, there were 27 failed samples in 2005 out of the 72,800 tests we conducted, i.e. 0.04%
7. Any unsatisfactory vegetables will be returned to suppliers. Follow-up actions include visits to the farm(s) by our Agricultural Scientist for investigation, corrective action measures made with the farms, and in cases where corrective actions cannot be made, we are prepared to terminate the contract and this has happened before.

Our food safety control programme Fresh Check does more than just testing vegetables. We have a team of 20 scientists and specialists charged with the duties of inspection, accreditation of suppliers, sample taking, testing, making corrective actions, etc. In addition to the 72,800 tests we do on Chinese vegetables, every year, we collect 6,000 samples of other fresh food and conduct microbiological testing for 13 different types of bacteria, general as well as specific.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

In response to this incident, PARKnSHOP has decided to take the following immediate actions:

1. To further improve safety of leafy Chinese vegetables, we will pay a round of visit to all our Accredited Farms in the Mainland within two weeks to reinforce again the proper use of pesticides, proper recording methods and ensure that they understand the consequence of possible termination of contract should they violate the rules.
2. We recognize the consumers' concern over the safety of non-leafy vegetables, and we have as of this morning, increased the testing of tomatoes to include each and every delivery from each supplier each day.
3. We are conducting a feasibility study on non-leafy vegetables to identify the additional types we can include in the our Farm Check system.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, PARKnSHOP is taking every possible and responsible step that we can take to improve the safety of food for our customers in Hong Kong. These measures are over and above any government requirement and more than any other retailer. We are serious about the subject and are proactively investing HK\$5 million every year on food safety. We make every effort to control our supply chains from farm to table as much as possible because we understand that this is the only way to ensure maximum safety. Close to 80,000 sample tests on fresh food are conducted every year and we will look into increasing the capacity as much as we can. We believe that consumers in Hong Kong deserve that extra effort we put in food safety, and we will continue such commitment.

We will work closely with the government on all issues relating to food safety.

Peter Johnston, Chartered Scientist (Food)
General Manager – Quality, Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs
ParknShop

20th April 2006

PARKnSHOP Laboratory Test for Chinese Leafy Vegetables

百佳超級市場中式葉菜測試實驗室



Date: 20 April 2006

PARKnSHOP Accredited Farm

百佳超級市場認可農場



Pak Choi 白菜



Choi Sum 菜心

Date: 20 April 2006