

**For discussion
on 26 May 2006**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Importation of Chilled Pork from the Mainland

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the latest development of the proposal to import chilled pork from the Mainland.

BACKGROUND

2. At the meeting of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene held on 14 February 2006, Members were informed that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) had discussed with the State General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) about the sanitary requirements and mechanism of importation of chilled pork to Hong Kong and had conducted a number of inspections to the facilities, operation, production process and the hygiene monitoring system of four chilled pork processing plants and their associated farms in Guangdong and Shenzhen. We are now ready to accept the supply of chilled pork from selected plants in the Mainland.

Separation of the Sale of Fresh and Chilled/Frozen Meat

3. On the suggestion that the sale of fresh and chilled/frozen meat, namely pork, beef or mutton, should require two separate licences and be disallowed in the same premises, the Administration has consulted the trades representing fresh pork traders, chilled pork importers, local pig farmers and supermarket chains. They have divergent views. Fresh pork traders and local pig farmers emphasised the importance of segregation in order to preserve the cold chain of chilled/frozen pork from import to retail level. On the other hand, supermarket chain representatives objected to the proposal which they regarded would reduce consumer choice and considered that the existing requirements for the retail sale of fresh and chilled pork respectively are adequate to safeguard food hygiene. Chilled pork importers expressed no strong views on the proposal and pledged to do their part to enhance the

effectiveness of the source tracing system. They also urged for the import of chilled pork from the Mainland as soon as possible.

4. The suggestion will require amendment to the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132 sub. leg.). Having taken into regard the views as set out in paragraph 3 above, the Administration is now working with the Department of Justice on the amendment legislation. We propose to amend the Regulation to prohibit the sale of fresh pork, beef or mutton with any chilled/frozen pork, beef or mutton in the same premises. The same premises will be defined as a unit with walls of full height from the floor to the ceiling and separate access for entry or exit. When the relevant legislative amendment comes into effect upon its passing, the same fresh provision shop or the same stall in a public market will only be permitted to sell either fresh or chilled/frozen pork/beef/mutton but not both.

5. The new arrangement will affect those traders who are now endorsed to sell fresh pork/beef/mutton plus either chilled or frozen pork/beef/mutton or both. At present, there are 337 fresh provision shops (of which about 220 are in supermarkets and about 110 are individual retail shops) that are endorsed to sell fresh pork/beef/mutton plus either chilled or frozen pork/beef/mutton or both. There are also 37 stalls in public markets that are endorsed to sell both fresh and chilled pork/beef/mutton.

WAY FORWARD

6. We plan to table the amendment regulation to be made by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene under section 56 of Cap. 132 at Legislative Council in June. The object of the amendment regulation is to prohibit the sale of fresh and chilled/frozen pork/beef/mutton in the same premises and the regulation will take effect six months upon gazettal to allow all operators (existing and new) to make the necessary adjustments/meet the new requirements. Import of chilled pork from the Mainland can commence as early as this summer if there is clear indication that no further amendments are to be made to the amendment legislation.