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the Administration)

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
and Panel on Health Services**

**Minutes of Joint Meeting
held on Saturday, 17 June 2006 at 9:00 am
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

- * Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP
- * Hon Bernard CHAN, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
- * Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
- # Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long
- Δ Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki (Chairman)

Members of the Panel on Health Services

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon Mrs Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, SBS, JP
Hon LI Kwok-ying, MH

Member attending : Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH

Members absent : Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

- * Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC

Members of the Panel on Health Services

Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum
Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP

(Δ Also Chairman of the Panel on Health Services)

(# Also Deputy Chairman of the Panel on Health Services)

(* Also members of the Panel on Health Services)

Public Officers : Mr Eddy CHAN
Attending Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Food and Environmental Hygiene) (Ag) / Deputy Secretary (Food and Environmental Hygiene)

Miss Susie HO
Deputy Secretary (Health) 1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Wallace LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr S P LAU
Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Mr K K LIU
Assistant Director (Agriculture)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Ms Rhonda LO
Assistant Director (Operations)3
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr LEUNG Pak-yin
Controller, Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

Dr CHUANG Shuk-kwan
Principal Medical and Health Officer (Epidemiological Studies)
Department of Health

Dr Teresa CHOI
Principal Medical and Health Officer (SS)
Department of Health

Clerk in Attendance : Mrs Constance LI
Chief Council Secretary (2)5

Staff in Attendance : Miss Betty MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)1

Ms Anna CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2)5

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I Election of Chairman

Dr KWOK Ka-ki was elected Chairman of the joint-Panel meeting.

II Actions taken to prevent the spread of avian influenza in Hong Kong following the recent confirmed case of human infection of H5N1 in Shenzhen

[LC Paper No. CB(2) 2448/05-06(01)]

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Health)1 (DS(H)1) introduced the Administration's paper detailing the actions taken by Government on preparedness for avian influenza outbreaks in Hong Kong following receipt of a notification of a suspected and subsequently confirmed case of human avian influenza (H5N1) infection in Shenzhen.

(Post-meeting note : The Administration's paper tabled at the meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2448/05-06(01) on 19 June 2006.)

Surveillance and preventive measures

3. Referring to the recent confirmed case of human infection of H5N1 in Shenzhen, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that it was alarming that there was apparently no avian influenza outbreak at chicken farms in Guangdong province. Mr WONG questioned the effectiveness of suspending import of live poultry from Guangdong province as a measure to prevent human infection of H5N1 in Hong Kong.

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4. Controller, Centre for Health Protection (Controller/CHP) said that the health experts were studying the clinical conditions and epidemiology of the human infection case in Shenzhen. The 21-day suspension of import of live poultry would allow time for the relevant authorities to conduct full investigation. Controller/CHP advised that enhancement of the on-going surveillance measures, such as disease surveillance, investigation and control, port health surveillance, and risk communication, would enable early identification of any possible avian influenza outbreak.

5. DS(H)1 added that upon notification of the confirmed case, the Administration considered it prudent to take early steps to step up surveillance and public education against avian influenza. The public was reminded of the need to remain vigilant and to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. All public and private hospitals had to report any patients with pneumonia of unexplained etiology and had stayed in an H5N1 affected area prior to disease onset. In addition, public hospitals had also set up segregated zones in strategic clinical areas to monitor and manage patients with infection symptoms. As for port health measures, temperature screening for in-bound travellers was maintained at all immigration control points.

6. Acting Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Food and Environmental Hygiene) (PS(FEH)(Ag)) pointed out that it was Government's ultimate policy objective to achieve complete segregation of humans from live poultry as a means to prevent human infection from the disease. As a practical means to address the avian influenza problem, the Administration was actively exploring the development of a poultry slaughtering plant in Hong Kong to put together poultry slaughtering activities.

7. On the notification mechanism, Mr Fred LI welcomed the arrangement that the Administration was notified of the suspected case of human infection on this occasion, whereas in the past, Hong Kong was notified of confirmed cases only. The arrangement would help expedite the implementation of avian influenza surveillance and preventive measures in Hong Kong. Mr LI pointed out that the recent confirmed case in Shenzhen was not the first case of human infection without avian influenza outbreaks in chicken farms or markets. He expressed concern that the virus might have undergone mutation, and that the current vaccines for chickens might no longer be effective.

8. Mr Fred LI considered that given the proximity of Shenzhen to Hong Kong, it was desirable that backyard poultry keeping activities in Guangdong and Shenzhen would also be regulated. For example, backyard poultry keeping within a 5 km radius from Hong Kong should be banned. Mr LI asked about the environmental hygiene conditions in the wet markets in Guangdong and Shenzhen which sold live poultry. He urged the Administration to convey to the relevant Mainland authorities that live poultry markets should strictly comply with the hygiene standards set by the authorities. Mr LI further said that according to newspaper reports, half-cooked poultry meat was brought into Hong Kong from across the border. He asked whether

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the Administration would ban such activities. Mr LI also asked whether the import of live poultry could resume if there was no new case after the 21-day suspension period.

9. PS(FEH)(Ag) responded that the Mainland authorities attached great importance to reduce the risk of avian influenza outbreaks through close contact between poultry in farms as well as small backyard flocks. As part of the preventive measures, the Mainland authorities had actively introduced a vaccination programme for backyard poultry. PS(FEH)(Ag) further said that while banning backyard poultry activities in Guangdong and Shenzhen would be a decision for the Mainland authorities, both sides agreed that the Administration would be notified when there were cases of H5N1 found in backyard poultry kept in Guangdong and Shenzhen.

10. Regarding the concerns of smuggling of live poultry and poultry meat, PS(FEH)(Ag) added that the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) had stepped up surveillance work at all border points to combat illegal import of poultry into Hong Kong. The Administration had also launched publicity to discourage bringing raw and cooked meat into Hong Kong. As cooked meat did not pose high risk to public health, the Administration did not consider it necessary to prohibit travellers from bringing cooked meat into Hong Kong.

11. On the environmental hygiene conditions of wet markets in Shenzhen, Principal Medical and Health Officer (ES)/Department of Health (PMHO(ES)/D of H) advised that the expert team from Hong Kong had visited two wet markets in Shenzhen, including the wet market where the infected patient had visited before the onset of symptoms. The expert team observed that massive cleansing had been carried out in these markets, and that the poultry stalls were separated from other sections in the markets.

12. Mr Fred LI asked whether highly pathogenic avian influenza was detected in the confirmed human cases in the Mainland, given that there was no outbreak of avian influenza in chicken farms.

13. Controller/CHP advised that there were so far 19 human cases of H5N1 infection in the Mainland, and no mutation in the virus was found so far. Controller/CHP agreed that it would be more difficult to take precaution against human infection if there was no signs of infection among chickens. However, H5 viruses were mainly found in birds and poultry and there were sporadic cases of human infection. The community should be alert and maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. The Administration would step up educational publicity to enhance public awareness of the preventive measures, the public should avoid visiting wet markets in Shenzhen for the time being.

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14. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that the Administration should also step up surveillance of wild birds and migratory birds. The Chairman asked about the number of samples taken from wild birds for testing of H5 avian influenza virus and the test results.

15. Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation responded that surveillance measures for wild birds included continuous inspection and sample testing of wild birds. Daily surveillance of wild birds in Mai Po was conducted to detect any abnormalities. About 3 000 samples of wild birds were tested for H5 avian influenza in the past few months, and none of the samples carried the H5 virus.

16. The Chairman said that it was an improvement to the notification mechanism as Hong Kong was notified of the suspected case of human H5N1 infection shortly after the patient was admitted into hospital in Shenzhen. As it was rather unusual to have human H5N1 infection case in summer time, the Chairman asked about the adequacy of the relevant response measures in respect of disease surveillance and antiviral stockpile.

17. Controller/CHP responded that usually there were fewer human cases of avian influenza reported in summer than in winter, and the Administration would closely monitor developments especially whether the virus had undergone mutation. On antiviral stockpiling, Controller/CHP said that the current antiviral stockpiling level in Hong Kong was around 10 million doses of Tamiflu, which would reach around 20 million doses of Tamiflu by end of the year. The target antiviral stockpile level in Hong Kong was in line with the recommendation of the World Health Organisation for influenza pandemic planning. He envisaged that the pharmaceutical companies should not have problem in delivering additional antiviral in case there was an upsurge in demand.

18. Noting that an expert team from Hong Kong had visited Shenzhen on 14 June 2006, the Chairman requested the Administration to brief members on its discussion with Shenzhen experts. PMHO(SS)/D of H advised that, on 14 June 2006, officials from Hong Kong met with the Shenzhen experts who were directly involved in the case management to obtain first hand understanding of the clinical conditions and the epidemiology of the human infection case in Shenzhen, and also the investigation and control measures undertaken by Shenzhen authorities. The expert team learned that the Shenzhen authorities had stepped up disease surveillance and prevention measures. Experts of both sides agreed that the next one to two weeks would be a critical time as to whether new human cases would be found. PMHO(SS)/D of H added that the Administration maintained constant communication with the Guangdong and Shenzhen authorities and had good understanding of the disease control measures undertaken by them. The Shenzhen authorities had been requested to keep Hong Kong informed of any developments of the recent human infection case.

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19. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed reservations about the Administration's preparedness for avian influenza outbreak in Hong Kong. He said that the Administration had not reviewed and stepped up the existing surveillance and prevention measures against outbreaks of avian influenza, as it was unusual for chicken farms to show no signs of infection despite the human infection case.

20. Controller/CHP advised that the Administration had taken early steps to review and step up, where appropriate, surveillance and public education against avian influenza immediately after receipt of the notification of a suspected case of human infection in Shenzhen.

21. Mr Fred LI said that while backyard poultry keeping had been banned in Hong Kong, the threat of avian influenza would be reduced only if similar arrangement was adopted in Shenzhen given its proximity to Hong Kong.

22. PS(FEH)(Ag) said that it would be for the Mainland authorities to decide whether backyard poultry keeping in Shenzhen should be banned. The Administration could convey members' request to the Mainland authorities for consideration, if members so requested.

23. The Chairman proposed that he would, on behalf of the two Panels, write to the Administration requesting it to convey the following concerns and suggestions to the Ministry of Health and the Health Department of Guangdong Province –

- (a) given the risk of smuggling of live poultry and poultry meat into Hong Kong from across the border, it was desirable that backyard poultry keeping activities in Guangdong and Shenzhen would also be regulated and vaccination be introduced for such backyard poultry; and
- (b) more stringent actions were desirable to ensure that the wet markets in Guangdong and Shenzhen selling live poultry comply with the hygiene standards set by the relevant authorities.

Members agreed.

(Post-meeting note : The Chairman's letter was sent to the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food on 21 June 2006.)

Suspension of supply of live poultry and impacts on the trades

24. Mr Tommy CHEUNG noted that, following the confirmation of a case of human infection of H5N1 in Shenzhen, the supply of live poultry and day-old chicks from Guangdong province had been suspended from 16 June 2006 for a period of 21 days. Mr CHEUNG said that the trade was concerned whether there would be adequate supply of local live chickens to meet the demand during and immediately

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after the suspension period. He pointed out that on the last occasion when supply of live chickens was suspended in March 2006, the supply of day-old chicks was resumed at a later stage than live chickens, and there were insufficient supply of live chickens from local farms to meet the demand.

25. Assistant Director (Agriculture)/Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AD/AFCD) responded that supply of day-old chicks from the Mainland was suspended in March 2006 following a confirmed human H5N1 infection case, and the supply was resumed on 28 April 2006. The Administration was aware that the supply of day-old chicks had not resumed to normal level immediately after the suspension on supply of live chickens was lifted. This was because the suppliers in the Mainland had switched their supply to Mainland farms during the suspension period. The Administration would maintain close contact with the Mainland authorities on the resumption of supply. AD/AFCD said that given that there were about 2 million live chickens kept at local poultry farms and that the 600 000 day-old chicks imported into Hong Kong after 28 April 2006 would now be ready for sale at local market, the Administration believed that there would be adequate supply of live chickens to meet daily local demand. Moreover, the supply of Mainland chilled and frozen poultry meat was not affected.

26. Mr Tommy CHEUNG queried the need for suspension of the import of day-old chicks from Guangdong province given that there was no avian influenza outbreak at chicken farms.

27. AD/AFCD explained that both Hong Kong and the Mainland authorities were still monitoring the development of the human infection case in Shenzhen. The Administration considered it prudent to suspend the importation of live poultry and day-old chicks for the time being, and the arrangement was in line with international practice.

28. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the business of poultry traders and the livelihood of poultry workers and transportation workers were adversely affected during the suspension period. He asked whether the Administration would consider providing financial assistance or low interest loans to the traders to help them tide over the crisis. Mr WONG Kwok-hing added that live poultry stall employees were piece-rated casual workers, and they would not have any wages during the suspension period.

29. PS(FEH)(Ag) responded that there was no plan to provide financial assistance to poultry traders and workers during the temporary suspension of import of live poultry. However, ex-gratia payment and financial assistance were payable to poultry traders and workers under the voluntary surrender of licences/tenancies scheme for poultry traders.

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30. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that in the two recent confirmed cases of human infection in Shenzhen and Guangzhou, the patients had visited wet markets where live poultry were sold before showing symptoms of infection. However, persons in close contact with these patients did not exhibit any symptoms. Mr WONG said that referring to the case in Guangzhou in March 2006, it was still unable to substantiate that the patient was infected in the wet market. However, the suspension of export of live poultry and day-old chicks to Hong Kong for three weeks had caused adverse impact on the business of live poultry traders. Mr WONG considered that the 21-day suspension period too long. He asked whether the Administration would consider shortening the suspension period if no avian influenza outbreaks occurred in chicken farms in Guangdong and Shenzhen. He also asked whether assistance would be provided to the local chicken farmers and traders during the suspension period.

31. PS(FEH)(Ag) responded that the 21-day suspension period was recommended by World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as the required surveillance period for H5 avian influenza virus for live birds in an infected zone. The FEHD officials would visit the Mainland chicken farms to inspect the surveillance measures in place and discuss with the Mainland authorities the lifting of suspension of the supply of live poultry and day-old chicks to Hong Kong.

32. On the provision of assistance to the affected trades, PS(FEH)(Ag) said that in view of the threat posed by avian influenza on the live poultry trades, a voluntary surrender scheme was introduced for live poultry farmers, retailers and wholesalers to encourage them to switch to other business after receiving the financial assistance or ex-gratia payments under the scheme. PS(FEH)(Ag) added that the Administration had no intention to provide other forms of assistance live poultry traders, during the suspension period as it was individual traders' decision if they wished to remain in the trade.

33. Responding to Mr WONG Yung-kan, PS(FEH)(Ag) said that the 21-day suspension period would be counted from the date when the case of human infection of H5N1 was confirmed.

34. Mr WONG Yung-kan commented that the Administration was in the wrong direction in dealing with recent confirmed human case of avian influenza. Since there was no evidence to show that the virus was transmitted from chickens, he was concerned that the Administration might have overlooked other possible causes of infection. Mr WONG asked about the basis for the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (SHWF) to make a decision of suspending the import of live chickens from the Mainland.

35. PS(FEH)(Ag) said that SHWF had taken into account all available information including the clinical conditions and epidemiology of the patients provided by the Ministry of Health, as well as advice from local experts and academics, before deciding on a 21-day suspension of supply of live poultry, day-old chicks and pet

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birds from Guangdong province. He added that the arrangements were in line with the international practice, notably the standards set by OIE.

36. DS(H)1 said that since poultry and wild birds were potential carriers of H5N1 virus, the suspension of supply of live poultry would help minimize contact between human and live poultry and prevent an outbreak in Hong Kong.

37. Mr WONG Yung-kan commented that the Administration should formulate guidelines on the conditions for shortening the 21-day suspension period.

38. Controller/CHP explained that upon notification of the suspected case of human avian influenza, the relevant authorities would need time to conduct full investigation, such as whether it was an individual case or a cluster of cases, bearing in mind that the virus incubation period would last from seven to 10 days. From the risk assessment perspective, it would be prudent to take early steps to step up surveillance of the disease including suspension of import of live poultry from the infected zone.

39. Mr Vincent FANG pointed out that the response from the live poultry trade to the voluntary surrender scheme was not satisfactory. As many poultry traders had engaged in the business for decades, and it would be difficult for them to switch to other business. As Controller/CHP had pointed out, there would be sporadic avian influenza from time to time, and it would disrupt the live poultry business, the 21-day suspension of import of live poultry was applied every time when there was a confirmed H5N1 case. Mr FANG strongly urged the Administration to review the levels of ex-gratia payments under the voluntary surrender scheme, to attract more poultry traders to apply to cease operation. Mr FANG further said that the Administration should consider providing an emergency fund as an interim measure, to provide loans to traders and waive their market stall rentals when the import of live poultry was suspended.

40. PS(FEH)(Ag) reiterated that it was Government's policy objective to separate live poultry from humans as a means to prevent human infection from avian influenza. The development of a poultry slaughtering plant in Hong Kong was the long-term measure to address the avian influenza problem. PS(FEH)(Ag) said that the Administration would review the voluntary surrender scheme after the closing date for applications in August 2006. The Administration would consider members' views and revert to the Panel on the review outcome.

41. Mr Vincent FANG said that the live poultry trades were in need of immediate assistance as their business had been adversely affected following the suspension of import of live poultry. He strongly urged the Administration to accord priority for the setting up of an emergency fund to assist the trades.

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42. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that she agreed to the proposed surveillance and preventive measures, including the temporary suspension of import of live poultry, to prevent human infection of H5N1. However, she commented that the Administration had failed to provide adequate and appropriate assistance to the live poultry workers. She said that many live poultry workers were piece-rated casual workers, and they would not get any pay during suspension period. As their employers had not surrendered their licences/tenancies under the voluntary surrender scheme, those live poultry workers were not eligible for the retraining and financial assistance package offered under the scheme. Miss CHAN held a strong view that the Administration should put in place a mechanism to provide financial assistance to those live poultry workers laid off by their employers who did not surrender their licences/tenancies.

43. Dr Joseph LEE asked whether the 21-day suspension period would be further extended if there were further confirmed H5N1 cases during the period. He was considered that an extension of suspension period would pose greater hardship on the trade. He considered that apart from protecting public health, the Administration should also allow room for the live poultry trades to exist.

44. Dr LEE further said that the Administration should expedite the implementation of the development of a poultry slaughtering plant, so that the trade could make a decision whether they would continue their business. Dr LEE added that the Administration should provide financial assistance to the affected traders and workers to help them switch to other business. Dr LEE also expressed concern that smuggling of poultry into Hong Kong would increase following the suspension of import of live poultry from the Mainland. He enquired about the statistics on illegal poultry seized at the border.

45. PS(FEH)(Ag) stressed that the Administration would take into account members' views when reviewing the voluntary surrender of licences/tenancies scheme for poultry traders. PS(FEH)(Ag) said that the Administration had consulted North District Council on the proposed site for development of a slaughtering plant in the district. As there were opposing views from North District Council on the proposal, the Administration was considering the counter proposal made by the District Council. The Administration would decide on the site as soon as practicable. PS(FEH)(Ag) further said that he would obtain statistics from C&ED in respect of the amount of illegal poultry meat seized during the suspension period.

46. Dr Joseph LEE expressed disappointment that the Administration did not have a specific plan to address the concerns and problems of the live poultry trades. Dr LEE then asked whether the trades were consulted on the duration of the 21-day suspension period.

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47. PS(FEH)(Ag) said that as he had explained earlier, the 21-day suspension period was the standard set by OIE as a surveillance period for importing live birds from an infected zone of H5 avian influenza virus.

48. Mr Tommy CHEUNG reiterated that as the Government's decision to suspend the import of live poultry and birds from the Mainland had seriously affected the live poultry wholesaling, transportation, retailing and farming trades, the Administration should provide assistance to them to tide over the crises. Mr CHEUNG proposed to move the following motion to urge the Administration to provide immediate assistance to the affected trades. The wording of Mr CHEUNG's motion was -

“就內地多次發生人類感染禽流感個案，政府禁止內地活禽鳥進口的決定，對香港從事活家禽批發、運輸、零售、飼養行業構成嚴重打擊，食物安全及環境衛生事務委員會及衛生事務委員會聯席會議現促請政府：

- (a) 設立緊急援助基金，對受政府政策影響的業界提供援助或低息貸款以助業界渡時艱；
- (b) 在禁止內地活家禽和觀賞鳥進口期間，向政府轄下的批發及零售市場內的租戶提供免租；
- (c) 即時檢討活家禽零售、農場和批發行業自動退回牌照政策；及
- (d) 對非長期僱用的工人立即發放緊急援助金。”

[English translation

“That, in view of the repeated occurrence of human infection of avian influenza in the Mainland and the Government's decision to suspend the import of live poultry and birds from the Mainland, which seriously affect the live poultry wholesaling, transportation, retailing and farming trades, the joint meeting of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene and Panel on Health Services urge the Government to -

- (a) set up an emergency relief fund to provide assistance or low interest loans to traders affected by the Government's policy so as to tide them over the crisis;
- (b) waive the rents of stall lessees in the Government's wholesale and retail markets during the suspension of the import of live poultry and pet birds from the Mainland;
- (c) immediately review the policy of voluntary surrender of licences by live poultry retailers, farmers and wholesalers; and

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(d) immediately provide emergency relief to workers not under continuous employment.”

49. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed strong dissatisfaction that the Administration was unsympathetic towards the financial hardship faced by poultry workers during the suspension period. Mr WONG pointed out that immediately after the Administration announced the temporary suspension of import of live poultry from the Mainland, the live poultry retailers ceased operation and the poultry workers became unemployed at once. However, these workers were not eligible for financial assistance under the surrender scheme as their employers had not surrendered their licences/tenancies. Mr WONG strongly urged the Administration to immediately provide emergency relief to workers not under continuous employment. He said that as he was not a member of the two Panels, Mr Tommy CHEUNG had incorporated his request in the motion.

50. PS(FEH)(Ag) reiterated that the retraining and one-off grant package offered by the surrender scheme for live poultry traders aimed to assist the affected workers to take up to employment in other fields.

51. The Chairman put Mr Tommy CHEUNG’s motion to vote. Eight members present at the meeting unanimously voted for the motion. No member voted against the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed.

52. The Chairman said that he supported the Administration’s decision to suspend the importation of live poultry from the Mainland to give the relevant authorities time to conduct full investigation. However, the Administration should address the problems faced by live poultry trades who were adversely affected by the suspension policy. As most live poultry traders wished to continue their business when the importation of chickens resumed to the normal level, the Administration should provide relief loans, similar to the provision of loans to fishermen affected by the moratorium, to the poultry traders to tide over the crisis. The Chairman further said that the rationale for OIE to set the 21-day standard as a surveillance period of importing live birds from an infected zone of H5 avian influenza virus was to allow time to trace the source of infection. As far as live chickens from the Mainland were concerned, all the chickens were supplied by registered farms in the Mainland. To alleviate the concerns of the trade, he considered that the Administration should adopt flexibility in respect of the supply of live chickens from the Mainland.

53. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that despite the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene had discussed the issue of providing emergency assistance to the live poultry trades time and again, the Administration had not taken any actions to address the concerns of the trades and affected workers. Miss CHAN proposed that an adjournment debate be held at the Council meeting to urge the Administration to provide emergency assistance to the trades affected by Government’s decision to suspend the import of live poultry. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed support for the

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proposal. Mr WONG added that the Administration should also be urged to adopt preventive and control measures with regard to the repeated occurrence of human infection of avian influenza in the Mainland.

54. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed support for the proposal of having an adjournment debate at the earliest Council meeting. Mr CHEUNG said that the issue was urgent as the trades concerned had been seriously affected by the Administration's suspension of the import of live poultry. He suggested that the Chairman should seek the House Committee's support for dispensing with the seven days' notice period for moving the motion. Members agreed.

55. The Chairman said that he would seek the agreement of the Chairman of the House Committee to including the Panel's proposal in the agenda of the House Committee meeting.

(Post-meeting note : The proposal to move a motion for adjournment was considered and agreed to by the House Committee on 23 June 2006. The motion for adjournment was moved at the Council meeting on 5 July 2006.)

56. In concluding the discussion, the Chairman urged the Administration to seriously consider taking actions to assist the trades concerned.

57. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10:40 am.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
16 October 2006