

**Legislative Council meeting on 24 January 2007**  
**Progress Report from Health, Welfare and Food Bureau on**  
**Motion Debate on “Fully safeguarding the safety of food supply**  
**to Hong Kong”**

**Purpose**

During the motion debate at the Council meeting on 24 January 2007, the Legislative Council urged the Government to expeditiously adopt measures to fully safeguard the safety of food supply to Hong Kong. The Administration sets out the follow-up actions taken as below after passage of the said motion.

**To regulate the use of drugs and chemicals and their residue contents**

2. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has been conducting regular review and update of food safety standards. Currently, the CFS is reviewing food standards on veterinary drugs and pesticide residues in food, in consultation with the Expert Committee on Food Safety. We would, building on the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, propose a more comprehensive and clearer legislation to regulate the standard of pesticide residues. We would strive to finish the legislative proposals in six months' time and submit them to the Legislative Council.

**Setting up a licensing system for food importers and enhancing inspection and testing at border control points**

3. The Government is working on the implementation of a food importer registration scheme as part of the new food safety measures. The scheme aims to provide a comprehensive database of food importers in Hong Kong, which should help monitor the flow of imported food in Hong Kong and take prompt and effective enforcement action by requiring food importers to provide information for tracing of problem food in a food incident. We would consult the trade and relevant stakeholders when the proposal takes shape.

4. Moreover, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has been mounting

regular and ad hoc blitz operations with the relevant enforcement agencies at the Man Kam To Food Control Office in the course of carrying out food inspection work.

5. On enhancing inspection and testing at border control point through legislation, we plan to introduce legislation to regulate imported poultry eggs in the 2006-07 legislative session. The regulation of imported aquatic products, vegetables and fruits will form a component of the proposed Food Safety Bill. We have started the procedure for the drafting of the new food safety law and the relevant consultation work, with a view to introducing the law at an early date. The legislative proposals would be put forward for public discussion in the 2007-08 legislative session and be submitted to the Legislative Council for scrutiny after consolidating the views of various sectors.

#### **Establishment of a food supply chain tracking mechanism and introduction of legislation on food recall**

6. We are collaborating with the Mainland authorities in exploring the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, with live pigs imported from Guangdong as a pilot, to enhance the traceability of food supplied by the Mainland to Hong Kong. We aim to complete it within 2007 and will assess the outcome of the pilot programme, to explore the feasibility of applying such information technology (IT) to other food. Furthermore, we have put forward a legislative proposal on the recall/prohibition of sale of unsafe food to the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene in February 2007. The proposal will be embodied in the Food Safety Bill mentioned above.

#### **Review the existing food safety regulatory departments**

7. The CFS has been set up for nearly one year. We have started a review of its operation and function. The scope of the review will include looking at the challenges faced by the CFS during its first year including public expectations and concerns, the actions taken by the CFS in response to these challenges and the future measures that are proposed to further increase the safety of food supply.

## **Improving the food safety notification mechanism between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and combating the import of foods through irregular channels**

8. The Administration continues to play a key role in liaising with the food authorities of major exporting countries and regions to ensure the safety of imported food. In particular, we have enhanced communication with the State Food and Drug Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Commerce, the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal Government of the Mainland to tackle food safety issues that may have cross-boundary implications. Our enhanced enforcement in respect of unmanifested freshwater fish in February 2007 was a good case in point. We are determined to crack down on the import of foods through unauthorized channels.

## **Encouraging local and international experts and the trade to participate in the work of the Expert Committee on Food Safety**

9. An Expert Committee on Food Safety was set up in August 2006 under the CFS in order to further strengthen the consultative framework on food safety issues. The Expert Committee consists of academics, professionals, food experts, members of the trade and consumer group, and other experts. The current membership also includes three experts from the Mainland and overseas.

## **Enhancement of dissemination of information on food safety to promote public awareness**

10. The CFS takes a proactive approach in communicating issues having potential impact on food safety to the trade and the public in a timely and effective manner. This includes the quarterly publication of the “Food Safety Bulletin” and monthly online publication of the “Food Safety Focus”, and the timely issue of food safety information on the CFS’ website including food alerts, press releases, press briefings, etc.

## **Organizing and supporting technological research on food safety**

11. The CFS always strives to provide sound scientific basis for

effective management of food safety issues and risk communication to the public. We conduct regular and ad hoc risk assessment studies and researches on specific food hazards. The Food Research Laboratory, established under the CFS, is a dedicated research laboratory to support food risk assessment work of the CFS. Moreover, the Government Laboratory has been frequently exchanging the latest food testing information with local, Mainland and overseas food safety laboratories.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau  
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