

**Supplementary information provided by the Administration
in response to members' requests raised at previous meetings of
the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

Members' requests raised at the Panel meeting on 10 April 2007

- Information on how to accord priority of food items under targeted food surveillance provided by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS)

The Administration's response -

The CFS takes into account the level of risks to public health in determining the types of samples to be collected, the frequency and the number of samples for testing, under the food surveillance programme. The sampling priority is under constant review, in the light of latest overseas and local risk analyses.

2. The main enhancement of food surveillance programme is the increased emphasis on project-based targeted food surveillance for specific food items / hazards. The enhanced food surveillance programme, which adopts a three-tier approach, comprising routine food surveillance, targeted food surveillance, and seasonal food surveillance, is more client-oriented, and provides a preventive basis for proactive interventions.

3. Examples of targeted food surveillance include testing for microbiological quality of ice cream, microbiological quality of lunch boxes, nitrite and nitrate in meat and meat products; and examples of seasonal food surveillance include testing of rice dumplings before Tuen Ng Festival, moon cakes before Mid-Autumn Festival.

Members' requests raised at the Panel meeting on 8 May 2007

- Information on the Administration's follow-up actions in respect of the Consumer Council's test results and recommendations on the level of arsenic in dried food

The Administration's response -

4. Under the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations, Cap. 132 sub. leg. V, the maximum permitted level of arsenic in fish and

fish products is 6 mg/kg and that for shellfish and shellfish products is 10 mg/kg.

5. In 2002, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department conducted a study on “Dietary Exposure to Heavy Metals of Secondary School Students” which included arsenic. The results found that dietary exposure to arsenic for both average and high consumers of the secondary school students fell well below the safety reference value established by international food safety authorities. They were therefore unlikely to experience the toxicological effects of arsenic.

6. The CFS has been monitoring the levels of heavy metals, including arsenic, in dried aquatic products under its food surveillance programme. To follow up the Consumer Council’s test result, CFS had taken 25 samples of dried aquatic products for testing of arsenic and the results were all satisfactory.

7. Current regulatory levels for arsenic in food are considered adequate in protecting public health. CFS will keep in view the situation and consider the need for amendments to existing regulations as appropriate.