

立法會
Legislative Council

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**Paper for the House Committee meeting
on 4 May 2018**

**Proposed overseas duty visit to Brazil
by the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

Purpose

This paper seeks the permission of the House Committee for the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") to conduct a duty visit to Brazil to study its safety and quality control over frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat for export purpose.

Background

2. Brazil is Hong Kong's major supplier of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat. Under the existing agreement between Hong Kong and the Brazilian authorities, processing plants authorized by the Brazilian authorities for exporting frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat to Hong Kong should produce a health certificate issued by the local authorities for every consignment of such meat imported to Hong Kong.

3. In March 2017, it was reported that the Brazilian authorities had investigated into suspected bribery of food safety control officials by meat producers in exchange for permission to sell and export allegedly contaminated meat. Some countries (including the Mainland China) as well as the European Union subsequently imposed either full or partial import ban on Brazilian frozen and chilled meat and poultry products. The incident had aroused wide public concern over the safety of meat and poultry meat imported from Brazil into Hong Kong. The Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") temporarily suspended on 21 March 2017 the import of all frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil as a precautionary measure. On 28 March 2017, after taking into consideration the latest information available, including those provided by the

Brazilian authorities¹, CFS announced that the scope of the import ban on frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil would be restricted to 21 meat plants which were under investigation. Following the incident, CFS has started discussions with the Brazilian authorities to further improve the import arrangements for Brazilian frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat.

4. In May 2017, CFS received a complaint lodged by a local importer about a suspicious health certificate accompanying a consignment of frozen chicken feet imported earlier in 2017 from Brazil. On 30 August 2017, the Brazilian authorities confirmed that the health certificate was falsified and the related consignment of frozen chicken feet was pet food. During its follow-up investigation, CFS found that between October 2016 and September 2017, a total of 10 consignments (including the consignment involved in the complaint mentioned above) of meat products which were actually pet food had been exported to Hong Kong by the same Brazilian exporter listed on the suspicious health certificate. The importers concerned, however, advised that none of those 10 consignments of meat products had entered the local market. This notwithstanding, for the sake of prudence, CFS suspended the import of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat into Hong Kong by that particular Brazilian exporter and two affected Brazilian production plants with effect from 21 September 2017.

5. The above incidents have aroused members' deep concerns about the effectiveness of the food safety and quality control mechanisms and programmes put in place by the Brazilian authorities over frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat for export purpose.

Proposed duty visit by the Panel

Objectives of the proposed duty visit

6. At the Panel meeting on 10 April 2018, members agreed to conduct an overseas duty visit in the coming summer recess to Brazil. The objectives of the proposed duty visit are as follows:

¹ On 28 March 2017, the Brazilian authorities provided further information to CFS, including that they would strictly safeguard the international health certification process and the credibility of the surveillance system, and would continue to conduct regular audits of the system to ensure its operational efficacy. Moreover, apart from the 21 plants under investigation, there was no evidence of irregularities involving other meat plants authorized to export products to the international market. Those plants remained authorized by other countries or regions such as the Mainland, the European Union, Singapore, etc. to export meat products from Brazil to their destinations.

- (a) to understand the regulatory framework in Brazil governing the export of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat, including the statutory requirements, the food safety standards, the relevant sanitary compliance and inspection systems;
- (b) to study the health certification requirements and auditing process put in place by the Brazilian authorities, which are intended to ensure that meat products for export purpose are fit for human consumption;
- (c) to understand the surveillance and control measures taken by the Brazilian authorities in the wake of the incidents in March and May 2017 concerning the quality of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat exported to other countries, which are intended to address the problems identified and to ensure the food products' conformity with food safety requirements;
- (d) to exchange views with government officials in Brazil on food safety issues, with emphasis on the regulatory control over the export of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat;
- (e) to visit livestock and poultry farms in Brazil authorized to export meat products to the international market, slaughterhouses, livestock and poultry processing/manufacturing plants and government laboratories to observe the production line/the supply chain of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat; and
- (f) to meet with meat exporters/trade associations in Brazil to understand the logistics involved and the operation of the trade at export level.

Visit programme

7. The visit is tentatively scheduled for 12 to 19 August 2018. The tentative outline of programme is in **Appendix I**. The detailed visit programme is being drawn up with the assistance of the Consulate General of Brazil in Hong Kong.

Participants of the visit

8. A circular has been issued to invite Panel members and other non-Panel Members to indicate interest in joining the visit. As at 2 May 2018, a total of seven Members (including two non-Panel Members) have indicated interest in taking part in the visit. A list of the participants of the visit is in **Appendix II**.

Funding arrangements

9. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission, each Member is provided with an overseas duty visit ("ODV") account of \$55,000 for the purpose of conducting duty visits outside Hong Kong in the name of the Council or any of its committees. The fund in the ODV account is for use by the Member in a four-year term. Any expenditure incurred in one term in excess of the approved allocation has to be paid by the Member personally. If by the end of a term there are unused balances in Members' ODV accounts, the funds available will be used to pay those Members who have expended more than their allocation, in proportion to their excess qualifying expenditure. Members who have not served out their terms will not be entitled to such reimbursements.

10. A preliminary estimate of the expenditure for the duty visit (including airfare, hotel accommodation, in-town transportation, meals and sundry expenses, etc.) to be incurred by each participating Member for the proposed duty visit is about \$38,990 (for economy class air passage), \$53,279 (for premium economy class air passage) and \$93,790 (for business class air passage²). A breakdown of the estimated expenditure is in **Appendix III**. The actual expenditure is subject to the final number of participants, the visit programme, transportation cost and hotel room rate at the time of confirmation.

Advice sought

11. Rule 22(v) of the House Rules provides that should any Panel consider it necessary to undertake any activities outside Hong Kong under the name of the Panel of the Council, the prior permission of the House Committee shall be sought.

12. The House Committee's permission is sought for the Panel to conduct the overseas duty visit as proposed in the foregoing paragraphs.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 May 2018

² According to the decision of The Legislative Council Commission at its meeting on 10 July 2012, Members on duty visits should travel on economy class for short-haul flights of less than four hours, and on business class for long-haul flights of four hours or more.

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Proposed overseas duty visit to Brazil

Proposed timing : 12 August (Sunday) to 19 August (Sunday) 2018

(Tentative outline of programme #)

Date	Programme
12 August 2018 (Sun)	➔ Departure from Hong Kong in the early morning of 12 August and arrival in Sao Paulo in the afternoon on the same day (local time in Brazil)
<u>Sao Paulo/other cities</u>	
13 August 2018 (Mon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply
14 August 2018 (Tue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to the following facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Import and Export Limited for pork ➤ Livestock/poultry farms, slaughterhouses, and processing/manufacturing plants ➤ Official laboratory, LANAGRO
15 August 2018 (Wed)	
16 August 2018 (Thu)	
17 August 2018 (Fri)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing meeting with government officials
17 (Fri) or 18 (Sat) August 2018	➔ Departure from Sao Paulo for Hong Kong in the evening of 17 August or in the early morning of 18 August, and arrival in Hong Kong on 19 August (Sunday)

A detailed visit programme is being drawn up with the assistance of the Consulate General of Brazil in Hong Kong, subject to confirmation with the receiving parties/organizations.

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Proposed duty visit to Brazil

**List of participants
(as at 2 May 2018)**

Panel Members

1. Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS (Chairman)
2. Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki (Deputy Chairman)
3. Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
4. Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
5. Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho

Non-Panel Members

6. Dr Hon Junius HO Kwan-yiu, JP
7. Hon LUK Chung-hung

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Proposed duty visit to Brazil
Preliminary estimate of the expenditure

Duration of visit : 12 to 19 August 2018 (8 days)
Routing of visit : Hong Kong / Sao Paulo / Hong Kong

Breakdown of expenses

Items		Estimated expenses HK\$ (per person)		
1.	Air passage ^(Note 1) Hong Kong/Sao Paulo/ Hong Kong	Economy Class	Premium Economy Class	Business Class
		24,027	38,316	78,827
2.	Hotel accommodation (60% of the subsistence allowance) ^(Note 2) Sao Paulo/other cities (5 nights)	7,983		
3.	Meals, in-town travelling and sundries (40% of the subsistence allowance) ^(Notes 2 and 3) Sao Paulo/other cities	5,985		
4.	Travel insurance	480		
5.	Inoculation/vaccination ^(Note 4)	515		
TOTAL ^(Note 5) :		38,990	53,279	93,790

NOTE :

1. Air tickets for premium economy and business classes are subject to availability of seats at the time of confirming the bookings. Airfare quotation obtained in end-April 2018. Price is inclusive of tax and surcharges.
2. Exchange rates as at 2 May 2018:
BRL1 = HKD2.238
3. Other expenditure including hospitality, interpretation services and souvenirs will be charged against other votes of the Secretariat. Where the expenses on in-town travelling is paid for by the Secretariat (if group transportation is arranged), 5% of the subsistence allowance will be deducted.

4. According to the Department of Health ("DH"), visitors travelling to Brazil are advised to receive yellow fever vaccination. As travellers with certain health conditions may not be suitable to receive yellow fever vaccination, they should seek doctor's advice before receiving the vaccine. DH's advice and details about yellow fever vaccination are accessible at <http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>.
5. The actual total expenditure will vary subject to the final visit programme, and the airfare and hotel room rates at the time of confirmation.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 May 2018