

Laying of the Report Report No. 71 of the Director of Audit on the results of value for money audits was laid in the Legislative Council ("LegCo") on 28 November 2018. The Public Accounts Committee ("the Committee")'s supplemental report (Report No. 71A) on Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report ("Audit Report") was tabled on 8 May 2019.

2. **The Government Minute** The Government Minute in response to the Committee's Report No. 71A was laid in LegCo on 11 December 2019. The latest position and the Committee's further comments on these matters are set out in paragraphs 3 to 6 below.

Centre for Food Safety: Import control of foods
(Part 4 of P.A.C. Report No. 71A)

3. Hon Kenneth LEUNG declared that he was a member of the Trade and Industry Advisory Board. Hon SHIU Ka-fai declared that he was a member of the Trade and Industry Advisory Board and Business Facilitation Advisory Committee, and unremunerated honorary adviser or honorary member to some non-governmental organizations or trade associations.

4. The Committee was informed in the Government Minute which was laid before LegCo in December 2019 that:

Control of foods imported by air

- the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") had conducted a review and issued a new guideline which required that with effect from January 2019, every import consignment of foods regulated under the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK) must be accompanied by the original copy of health certificate and underwent risk-based inspection prior to release;
- CFS had enhanced guidance training for its frontline staff, including setting out the number of samples to be collected and formulating the guidelines on random sampling for physical inspections at the Airport Food Inspection Office;

Control of foods imported by road

- the joint operations of CFS and Customs and Excise Department targeting vegetable vehicles had been extended to cover vehicles carrying regulated foods (e.g. eggs and meat) since January 2019;
- CFS had included the containers approved for carrying chilled meat/poultry in the approved vehicle list for transporting chilled meat and poultry. Through the inspection checklist for the frontline staff of boundary food control points, frontline staff were required to check whether the vehicles and containers transporting chilled meat and poultry were on the above list, and to ensure that only approved vehicles and containers were released;

Control of foods imported by sea

- CFS was exploring with the Architectural Services Department, Customs and Excise Department and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department the possibility of setting up a food control office with cold storage facilities at Kwai Chung Customhouse to enhance inspections of targeted food consignments;
- CFS had implemented a series of improvement measures to tackle the problem of importers applying for a number of import licences for spare use, such as enhancing the computer system to ensure that the same food consignment would not be issued with multiple import licences;

Control of live food animals and live aquatic products

- Prior to the release of consignments of livestock, the frontline staff of CFS would seek immediate clarification with the relevant Mainland authorities if the registration status of the farms concerned was not confirmed or there were other irregularities;
- CFS had implemented improvement measures, including checking whether the consignee's name on the animal health certificate was identical with the importer's name on the permit issued by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department during import inspections, and verifying whether the quantities of livestock admitted to slaughterhouses match the quantities shown on the movement permits issued by the officers at the boundary control point to drivers,

for which CFS would verify the information with the relevant parties where necessary;

Registration and inspection of food traders

- CFS had stepped up efforts to remind staff at the boundary control points to check the registration status of the importer immediately upon the arrival of an imported food consignment. CFS would take enforcement actions against unregistered food importers based on the circumstances of individual cases;
- CFS had enhanced supervision to ensure that the licensing offices had taken appropriate follow-up actions on unsuccessful inspections, including issuance of letters to the food traders concerned, and putting food traders involved in unsuccessful inspections but with a valid registration status on the monitoring list;

Other issues relating to import control of foods and way forward

- CFS was developing and building five major information technology systems, namely a Food Trader Portal, a Food Import and Export Control System, a Food Incident Management System, a revamped Food Surveillance System and a Food Classification and Coding System, with a view to supporting the work of its frontline staff and reinforcing its capability in control and surveillance of imported foods, management of food safety incidents, risk assessment and food traceability. These information technology systems were expected to be rolled out in order of priorities commencing from end 2019, and be completed by 2024; and
- a task group, led by the Controller, CFS, has been set up to take forward the recommendations of the Audit Commission and the Committee concerning the work of CFS in food safety management and import control. In 2019-2020, 35 additional civil service posts would be created in CFS along with an additional provision of \$25 million to review and implement the enhancement measures.

5. The Committee wrote to Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene on 6 January 2020 to enquire about how CFS would balance the need in the import control of foods and the facilitation of business operation. The replies from **Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene** are in *Appendix 5*.

P.A.C. Report No. 73 – Part 6
Supplemental Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Report No. 71 of the Director of Audit
on the Results of Value for Money Audits [P.A.C. Report No. 71A]

6. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of further development on the subject.