

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2) 1085/02-03

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

**Paper for the House Committee meeting on
7 February 2003**

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

Purpose

This paper seeks the permission of the House Committee, under rule 22(t) of the House Rules, for the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene to conduct an overseas duty visit to Australia and Japan for the purpose of understanding the experience of these two countries in the regulatory control of food, including their food surveillance and food labelling systems.

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

Background

3. The Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene has been closely monitoring the food safety standards and the surveillance systems for the control of local and imported live food animals/poultry, chilled/frozen meat, packaged food and other food products, in order to safeguard public health.

4. The Panel has all along taken a keen interest in the import control of food and the food surveillance measures, to ensure that all food on sale are wholesome, unadulterated and fit for human consumption. Panel members have expressed concern as to whether the existing legislation and administrative measures for setting food standards, food inspection, laboratory testing, public education and enforcement are adequate and appropriate in protecting public health. The Panel has also held discussions to explore more effective ways to enhance the hygiene conditions of local farms and markets. In addition, the issue of whether a mandatory labelling system should be

introduced for genetically modified food in Hong Kong will be further pursued by the Panel with the Administration.

The proposed duty visit

Purpose and places for the visit

5. At the meeting on 15 July 2002, the Panel agreed in principle that the Panel should undertake an overseas duty visit in April 2003 to Australia and Japan to study their food regulatory systems. The Panel also agreed to focus the study on the following areas -

- (a) quarantine systems for imported food;
- (b) regulation and procedures for food for export;
- (c) food labelling requirements; and
- (d) licensing and regulation of food business.

6. The proposed overseas duty visit will provide members with first-hand information on the advanced food regulatory systems put in place in Australia and Japan to ensure the safety of food and to protect the public from health hazards caused by the consumption of food. The Panel notes that Australia exports a substantial volume of seafood, meat products and dairy produce to Hong Kong, while Japan relies heavily on imported food which accounts for 60% of the food consumed in the country. The Panel also notes that both countries have implemented a labelling system for genetically modified food. The experience of these countries will provide useful reference for Hong Kong in further improving its food control systems.

7. As regulation of food premises is an important component of public health in any community, the Panel is also interested in the licensing, regulation and enforcement of food safety and hygiene standards imposed on food premises in Australia and Japan.

Timing of the visit

8. To avoid clashing with the Council and House Committee meetings scheduled in April 2003, the Panel has proposed that the visit should last for nine days, from 13 to 22 April 2003.

Participants of the visit

9. As the visit will touch on topics which have implications on different trades, consumers and the public, the visit is open to non-Panel Members. A circular has been issued to invite Panel members and other Members to indicate interest in joining the visit. As at 5 February 2003, a total of nine Members (including three non-Panel Members) have indicated interest in joining the visit. A list of the participants is in **Appendix I**.

Assistance of the Consulates and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices

10. The LegCo Secretariat will enlist the assistance of the Consulates of Australia and Japan in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices in Sydney and Tokyo in drawing up the visit programmes and making logistical arrangements.

Funding arrangements

11. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission on 20 February 2001, each Member (except the President) is provided with an overseas duty visit account (ODV account) of \$61,000 for the purpose of duty visits outside Hong Kong organised by committees, other than the Parliamentary Liaison Subcommittee, of the Council. The fund in the account is for use by the Member in a four-year term. Any expenditure incurred in one term in excess of \$61,000 has to be paid by the Member personally.

12. A preliminary estimate of the expenditure to be incurred by each participating Member for the overseas duty visit is about \$40,000 (economy class air passage) or \$64,000 (business class air passage). A breakdown of the estimated expenditure is in **Appendix II**.

Advice sought

13. The House Committee's permission is sought under rule 22(t) of the House Rules for the Panel to conduct the overseas duty visit as proposed.

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Proposed overseas duty visit to Australia and Japan in April 2003

Tentative list
(as at 5 February 2003)

Members	Visit both Australia and Japan (13-22 April 2003)	Visit Japan only (17-22 April 2003)
<i>Panel members</i>		
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP (Chairman)	√	
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP (Deputy Chairman)		√
Hon WONG Yung-kan	√	
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung	√	
Hon LEUNG Fu-wah, MH, JP	√	
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok		√
<i>Non-Panel Members</i>		
Hon CHAN Kwok-keung		√
Hon CHOY So-yuk		√
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee	√	
Total	5	4

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Estimated budget for the overseas duty visit to
Australia and Japan in April 2003**

Duration of visit : 13 to 22 April 2003

Size of delegation : 9 Members (4 Members will visit Japan only)
(to be accompanied by one
Secretariat staff member)

Items	Estimated expenses HK\$ (per person)	
	<u>Economy</u>	<u>Business class</u>
1. Return air passage		
(a) Hong Kong / Canberra / Melbourne / Hong Kong	10,180	28,000
(b) Hong Kong / Tokyo / Osaka / Hong Kong	6,600	13,330
2. Hotel accommodation		
(a) Australia	4,000	
(b) Japan	8,834	
3. Overseas subsistence allowance		
(a) Australia	2,528	
(b) Japan	5,890	
4. Travel insurance	340	
5. Airport tax	875	
TOTAL :	39,247 (Say : HK\$40,000)	63,797 (Say : HK\$64,000)

NOTE :

Other expenditure including hospitality, local group transportation, interpretation services and souvenirs will be charged against other votes of the Secretariat.