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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of Special Meeting
held on Thursday, 28 July 2005 at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members Present** : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP (Chairman)
Hon WONG Yung-kan, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Bernard CHAN, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
- Member Attending** : Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
- Member Absent** : Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
- Public Officers Attending** : Dr York CHOW
Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
- Mr Eddy CHAN
Acting Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
- Miss Vivian KO
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Jeff LEUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary (Health) 1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Dr MAK Sin-ping
Deputy Director (Food and Public Health)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr Thomas CHUNG
Assistant Director (Food Surveillance and Control)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr LAI Ching-wai
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Howard WONG
Senior Veterinary Officer (Farms)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Regina CHING
Acting Controller
Centre for Health Protection
Department of Health

Dr Teresa CHOI
Acting Consultant/Community Medicine
(Communicable Disease)
Department of Health

Clerk in Attendance : Mrs Constance LI
Chief Council Secretary (2)5

Staff in Attendance : Miss Lolita SHEK
Senior Council Secretary (2)7

Ms Anna CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2)5

I Suspension of export of frozen pork from Sichuan

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[LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 2385/04-05(01) to (02) and CB(2)2394/04-05(01) to (03)]

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (SHWF) highlighted the salient points in the Administration's paper on "Disease Situation in Certain Areas of Sichuan Province" [LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 2394/04-05(01)]. SHWF also gave an account of the recent epidemic outbreak in certain areas of Sichuan Province as follows –

- (a) on 22 July 2005, the Ministry of Health (MoH) notified the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) about human disease outbreak and cases of pigs and sheep dying of unexplained causes in Ziyang city, Sichuan. CHP immediately contacted MoH to enquire into the latest developments of the incident;
- (b) on 24 July, SHWF briefed the media on the incident;
- (c) on 25 July, the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food met with (the State General Administration of Quality Supervision Inspection and Quarantine) AQSIQ in Beijing to look into the latest developments of the incident. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) reflected to the Mainland authorities the concerns of the public about the safety of pork imported from Sichuan. In response to the concern raised by the HKSAR Government and as a precautionary measure, the Mainland authorities suspended the export of meat products of pigs and sheep from the cities of Ziyang and Neijiang with effect from 25 July. MoH also announced that the affected people in the Mainland were suffering from Streptococcus suis infection, but the agents that triggered the disease were still under investigation.

2. SHWF explained that Streptococcus suis was commonly found in pigs and in overseas countries such as the Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy and Canada. There were infection cases from time to time, and the patients were infected mainly through close contact in the course of work when slaughtering or handling sick pigs. The patients in the recent epidemic outbreak in Sichuan could have been cured, if they had been treated early.

3. SHWF further explained that in determining whether to suspend the import of meat from certain countries or places, the Administration would need to consider from the public health and food safety perspective and make reference to guidelines issued by the relevant international authorities. In respect of animal health and public health, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) had specified that certain animal diseases such as avian influenza and mad cow disease should be reported to OIE. OIE also issued recommendations which importing countries could follow to

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restrict the import of animals and animal products from countries/places affected by these diseases. Nevertheless, *Streptococcus suis*, which was commonly found in pigs, was not required to be reported to OIE, nor had OIE issued any guideline with regard to this disease. In Hong Kong, the disease was also not one of those required to be reported under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) Regulation (Cap. 139 sub. leg. A).

4. SHWF stressed that there was no precedent internationally in which import of pork was banned because of *Streptococcus suis*. While the Administration was entirely autonomous in making decisions on suspending the import of meat from certain countries or places, such decision must be based on scientific principles and evidence. SHWF further explained that compared with *Streptococcus suis*, avian influenza and mad cow disease were of much higher public health and food safety concern. Therefore, during the last outbreak of avian influenza and mad cow disease, most countries in Asia had banned the import of poultry and beef from the infected countries and places. The HKSAR Government had also suspended the import of live chickens from the Mainland and beef from the United States of America (USA), Canada and Japan, taking into consideration OIE's guidelines.

5. SHWF informed members that Sichuan Province exported about 40% of its frozen pork to Hong Kong and 60% to other places. So far, no country or place had banned the import of frozen pork from Sichuan. He reiterated that in response to the concern raised by HKSAR Government, the Mainland authorities had suspended the export of pigs, sheep and their meat products from the cities of Ziyang and Neijiang. MoH had also agreed to HKSAR despatching a team of health experts to participate in the epidemiological investigation in Sichuan. The Administration would continue to monitor the situation closely and liaise with the Mainland authorities to keep abreast of the latest developments.

Monitoring of imported meat

6. The Chairman said that the Administration had not provided a response in its paper to the second and third questions raised in his letter dated 27 July 2005 to SHWF [LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 2394/04-05(02)] concerning whether tests were conducted on imported pork for *Streptococcus suis*. Mr WONG Yung-kan raised similar concern.

7. Deputy Director (Food and Public Health) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (DD/FEHD) explained that under the current food surveillance system, tests were conducted on food based on its risk and impact on human health. For example, microbiological tests were conducted for bacteria which could cause food poisoning. However, the disease caused by *Streptococcus suis* was mainly an occupational disease, and there were no reports about food poisoning caused by *Streptococcus suis*. While *Streptococcus suis* was commonly found in pigs, the pork

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would not pose risk to human health if it was properly handled and cooked before consumption.

8. On the monitoring of imported frozen meat, DD/FEHD informed members that random tests were conducted for residue of drugs and chemicals in meat. DD/FEHD added that after the epidemic outbreak in Sichuan, the Administration had strengthened inspection and quarantine measures for imported live pigs and meat. The health certificates of imported frozen pork were also checked to ensure that the meat was imported from legitimate sources.

9. DD/FEHD stressed that it was important to educate the public on the safety measures in handling meat, and the Administration had stepped up publicity in this regard. In response to public concern about possible mutation of *Streptococcus suis*, the Administration would collect samples from sick and dead pigs in the slaughterhouse to test whether there was mutation of the bacteria.

10. As regards the third question raised in the Chairman's letter dated 27 July concerning the quantity of pork imported from Sichuan, Assistant Director (Food Surveillance and Control) of FEHD (AD/FEHD) said that up to 22 July 2005, among the 18 000 tons frozen pork imported from Sichuan in 2005, about 5 000 tons were imported from Ziyang and Neijiang.

11. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that it was regrettable that the Administration did not conduct tests on the pork imported from Sichuan. He criticised the Government for being too passive in regulating the import of food, and it did not even bother to conduct tests on the pork imported from Sichuan to ascertain whether the pork had been infected. Mr WONG further said that according to the report in a local newspaper, the bacteria might have mutated and become food borne, and this had caused much public concern. He considered it very dangerous to rely on the media to reflect public concern to the Mainland authorities, and to rely on the Mainland to suspend export of problematic food to Hong Kong. He urged the Administration to be more proactive in safeguarding food safety and public health.

12. SHWF explained that as *Streptococcus suis* was commonly found in pigs, there was always a possibility of finding *Streptococcus suis* in pork. However, the pork found to have the bacteria was not necessarily unsafe, so long as it was properly handled and thoroughly cooked before consumption. On the monitoring of frozen pork from Sichuan, SHWF said that the food regulatory procedures and legislation had been strictly complied with, and the Administration did not find the frozen pork from Sichuan would pose a higher risk than pork from other places. Nevertheless, after the HKSAR Government had relayed the concern of Hong Kong people to the Mainland authorities, the latter had decided to suspend the export of frozen pork from the two cities in Sichuan.

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13. SHWF further said that as the disease would mostly affect workers who handled pigs or raw pork, the Administration had stepped up publicity on the preventive measures against infection. As random tests were being conducted on pigs and pig carcasses, if *Streptococcus suis* on pigs was found to have mutated, the Administration would take additional precautionary measures to guard against the disease.

Suspension of pork from Sichuan

14. Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr Andrew CHENG, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr Vincent FANG and Dr KWOK Ka-ki commented that the Administration had been too passive in monitoring the pork imported from Sichuan. They considered that the Administration should have suspended the import of pork from Sichuan at an earlier stage, instead of waiting for the Mainland authorities to order suspension of export of pork from Sichuan to Hong Kong. Mr Andrew CHENG and Mr WONG Yung-kan added that as the Administration had not suspended the import of pork from Sichuan, the public had grave concern about the safety of pork and had lost confidence in consuming pork.

15. Mr WONG Kwok-hing queried whether the HKSAR Government really had the power to suspend the import of pork from Sichuan. Mr WONG said that it appeared to him that the HKSAR Government was afraid of offending the Mainland authorities, therefore it had only reflected the concern of the people in Hong Kong to the Mainland, rather than taking the initiative to ban the import of pork from Sichuan.

16. Mr Andrew CHENG expressed concern that SHWF's handling of the recent incident reminded him of the handling by the former SHWF and former Director of Health of the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003. He pointed out that the Mainland authorities' decision to suspend the export of pork from Sichuan was not solely based on scientific principles but was to allay public worries. He said that the present case was similar to the last outbreak of mad cow disease in USA, Canada and Japan, and HKSAR Government had banned the import of beef from these countries. He urged the Administration to exercise its power to ban the import of pork from Sichuan, in order not to give the public the impression that the Administration had not wanted to do so for fear of affecting the relationship with the Mainland.

17. SHWF reiterated that the HKSAR Government was entirely autonomous in making decisions on whether to suspend the import of meat from countries or places which was not safe or hygienic for consumption. However, HKSAR had to follow international practice, and any such decision had to be based on scientific principles and facts. As the disease was basically an occupational rather than a food-borne disease, there were no grounds to suspend the import of pork from Sichuan. Moreover, there was no scientific evidence that the meat from Sichuan was unsafe for human consumption. The HKSAR Government must uphold its credibility and would

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only impose a ban on imports based on scientific facts and principles. SHWF added that if there were serious public concern or worries about the safety of a certain food item, the Administration would reflect such concerns to the supplier for recall action.

18. SHWF stressed that the Administration had responded quickly to the public concern about the safety of imported pork, and had stepped up liaison with the Mainland authorities to keep abreast of the latest developments. In response to the concern of the HKSAR Government, the Mainland authorities had suspended the export of pork and sheep products from the cities of Ziyang and Neijiang with effect from 25 July 2005, and those from the whole Sichuan Province with effect from 28 July 2005. SHWF added that the Mainland's decision to suspend the export of meat from Sichuan to Hong Kong was a commercial decision in view of the worries of the Hong Kong people about the safety of pork from Sichuan.

19. Acting Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food supplemented that as *Streptococcus suis* was commonly found in pigs, its presence in pork would not be unexpected, if tested. It would deviate from the international practice if HKSAR Government suspended the import of pork solely because the bacteria were found in imported pork.

20. Referring to Mr Andrew CHENG's remarks about mad cow disease, DD/FEHD responded that paragraph 4 of the Administration's paper had explained that *Streptococcus suis* was different from avian influenza and mad cow disease, and the present situation was not comparable with the outbreak of the two diseases in the past.

21. Mr Vincent FANG expressed concern that many people had died of the disease in the present epidemic outbreak, despite the fact that *Streptococcus suis* was commonly found in pigs. The high mortality rate had aroused much public concern about the safety of pork from Sichuan, therefore the Sichuan Province had acted proactively by suspending the export of its frozen pork to Hong Kong immediately. By contrast, the HKSAR Government was rather passive in this incident. He urged the Administration to take into account public concern in reacting to the situation.

22. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the Administration should have taken the initiative to arrange for its officials to visit Sichuan to understand the situation at an earlier stage, instead of waiting for the invitation from the Mainland authorities.

23. The Chairman remarked that the public had lost confidence in consuming pork in view of the developments in Sichuan. He agreed with Mr Vincent FANG that the Administration should also address public concern about the safety of pork, and not only base on scientific principles, when considering how to handle the situation.

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24. SHWF responded that the Administration had acted proactively in handling the situation. The Administration had actively liaised with the Mainland authorities to obtain information on the situation in Sichuan. It had also explained to the public that the pork imported from Sichuan was safe and hygienic for consumption. The Administration had also reflected the concern of Hong Kong people to the Mainland authorities. However, it was not reasonable to suspend the import of frozen pork solely on grounds of public fear. He stressed that the Administration had strengthened the inspection of pig carcasses and the liaison with the Mainland authorities to keep abreast of developments.

Notification mechanism between Hong Kong and the Mainland

25. Referring to paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper, Mr Andrew CHENG said that the Administration was too passive in relying on notification from the Mainland. He added that the Panel on Health Services had expressed similar concern about the effectiveness of the notification mechanism.

26. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that as revealed in the past experience in the Administration's handling of outbreaks of epidemics, the Administration had been very passive in dealing with such situations. He expressed concern about the accuracy or completeness of information provided to the HKSAR Government through the notification mechanism, as the number of confirmed cases was small while the number of infections and deaths soared in the past week. He wondered whether there were other possibilities causing such a high mortality, for example, the emergence of a new virus. He said that the public had worries because there were many uncertain factors in the present epidemic in Sichuan.

27. SHWF responded that the outbreak occurred in the rural areas of Sichuan where there were no pathological records, and the health centres there were not equipped with laboratory equipment for bacteria testing. As regards the small number of confirmed cases so far, SHWF explained that clinical analysis and transmission of information took time. It was not yet certain whether it was the bacteria or a combination of factors including environmental factors that had caused the high mortality in Sichuan. Nevertheless, HKSAR Government had established point-to-point communication with the Mainland health authorities, and HKSAR health experts would also participate in the investigation in Sichuan. The Administration would follow up any new information and assess the extent of the epidemic and the impact on Hong Kong. The Administration would notify the public and take necessary actions if the epidemic would affect Hong Kong.

Safety of Pork imported from Sichuan

28. The Chairman asked whether *Streptococcus suis* II found in frozen pork would infect human, and whether Hong Kong could trace the source of any infected pork and recall such pork. Mr WONG Yung-kan and Mr Andrew CHENG also asked whether

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the Administration would liaise with the trade to recall the pork imported from Sichuan. Mr WONG added that the Administration could recall the pork kept in the warehouses.

29. AD/FEHD informed members that the bacteria would not grow in frozen pork, and it would be safe to consume pork after it had been thoroughly cooked. AD/FEHD added that all imported pork must be accompanied by health certificates issued by the relevant authorities. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to trace the pork after distributing to the retail outlets.

30. SHWF explained that all pork imported from the Mainland must pass through stringent inspection and quarantine checks, and they were accompanied by health certificates issued by AQSIQ or the relevant Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau certifying that the pork was safe and fit for human consumption. As the imported pork had satisfied all hygiene requirements, there was no ground to justify a recall action.

31. DD/FEHD supplemented that Hong Kong had followed the international practice in relying on the inspection and quarantine authorities of the exporting countries to ascertain the safety and hygiene of imported meat. In this connection, the Administration had requested the Mainland authorities to pay special attention to any irregularities in pig farms.

32. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that according to the media reports, the latest number of infected cases in Sichuan as at 27 July 2005 had increased from 114 to 131, and the mortality had also been increased from 24 to 27. It was also reported that the epidemic had spread to six other cities in Sichuan in addition to Ziyang and Neijiang. Mr WONG expressed concern about the safety of the pork imported from Sichuan, which amounted to approximately 35% of the total quantity of the pork imported to Hong Kong.

33. SHWF explained that from 25 July 2005 onwards, the Mainland authorities had stepped up monitoring of the disease and the areas put under surveillance. Since then, villages were required to report cases of Streptococcus suis disease. This could be a reason for the upsurge of cases of infections and mortality. However, the actual situation would need to be ascertained with the HKSAR expert team in Sichuan and with the Mainland authorities.

34. Acting Controller CHP of DH supplemented that after MoH had notified the HKSAR Government of the epidemic outbreak, CHP had been liaising closely with MoH to keep abreast of the developments. As at 27 July 2005, a total of 131 people in Sichuan had been affected, of whom 27 died, and eight were laboratory confirmed cases. Six cases were found in cities in Sichuan other than Ziyang and Neijiang.

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35. Mr Albert CHAN said that the people in Hong Kong were worried about the safety of frozen pork from Sichuan, as the agents that triggered the disease in Sichuan were not yet known. He was disappointed that the measures taken by the HKSAR Government as summarised in paragraphs 13 to 17 of the Administration's paper were not sufficient to allay public worries, as the paper did not provide clear guidelines on how people could prevent themselves from getting infected. Mr CHAN remarked that it was possible that the Government would not take the contingency measures for fear of causing panic in the community.

36. SHWF responded that while the agents that triggered the disease in Sichuan were still under investigation, there were reports that most of the patients who died of the disease in the Mainland had lived next to the pigs. As the patients could have been infected through contacts with sick pigs, workers in pig farms and slaughterhouses were exposed to higher risk and they had to take preventive measures to avoid infection. The Administration would liaise with the Mainland authorities on whether there were large numbers of sick and dead pigs on Mainland farms. Moreover, HKSAR experts also participated in the investigation of the disease in Sichuan. SHWF stressed that the HKSAR Government had taken all necessary precautionary measures to safeguard public health. When more information on the disease was available, the Government would implement additional measures as necessary.

Meat smuggling

37. Mr Vincent FANG and Mr WONG Yung-kan expressed concern about the "smuggling" of meat in Chung Ying Street at Sha Tau Kok and from Guangzhou. These members and Mr Tommy CHEUNG urged the Administration to liaise with the Mainland authorities to step up action against meat smuggling.

38. SHWF said that the Administration would strengthen border control to curb smuggling activities, and the Customs and Excise Department was also stepping up actions against smuggling activities by lorries.

Management of local pig farms

39. Mr Albert CHAN said that there were about 290 000 pigs being raised in local pig farms, and the smaller farms were also very crowded. Moreover, some farms, such as those in Tin Shui Wai, were very close to residential areas, causing nuisance to the nearby residents. He expressed concern that if there was an outbreak of epidemics in local farms, a large number of people would be affected. He asked whether the Administration would consider buying back the licences of local pig farm in order to address the problems caused by such farms.

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40. Mr Vincent FANG said that it was necessary to strengthen the management of local pig farms. He asked whether the Administration had provided guidelines to pig farmers to safeguard the safety of farm workers.

41. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should closely monitor any unusual deaths of pigs and the handling of pig carcasses in local farms. He added that similar surveillance and monitoring measures for the prevention of avian influenza should be adopted for pig farms.

42. Referring to the measures taken by the Administration as summarised in paragraph 17 of the Administration's paper, SHWF assured members that AFCD would continue to keep a close watch on the conditions in local pig farms. As regards the buying back of pig farm licences, SHWF said that a voluntary scheme for surrender of pig farm licence was still under consideration.

43. DD/FEHD informed members that a tracing system had been developed for live pigs imported from the Mainland, and surveillance and monitoring system similar to that for poultry was also adopted for pig farms. Senior Veterinary Officer (Farms) of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) explained that there was a regular monitoring programme for local pig farms, which was similar to that for poultry farms. Under the programme, pigs in the farms were vaccinated, samples would be collected from diseased pigs for testing, and post-mortem inspection of pigs would be conducted. It was illegal to dispose pig carcasses in areas other than pig carcasses collection points, and illegal dumping of pig carcasses was subject to prosecution. If unusual deaths of pigs were found on pig farms, tests on the pig carcasses from those farms would be conducted. The Administration would also conduct monthly counts on pigs in local farms to ensure that there was no unusually high mortality of pigs not reported to AFCD.

Measures to safeguard the safety of workers handling pigs and pig products

44. Mr Tommy CHEUNG expressed concern about the safety of those workers who had to handle pigs or pork, if the bacteria in frozen pork were still lethal after the pork was defrosted. He suggested the Administration to conduct tests on the meat from Sichuan which was still stored in the warehouse to ascertain this. The Administration should also clarify whether there was a large stock of frozen meat from Sichuan in Hong Kong. Mr CHEUNG added that he was disappointed that the Administration had not sent health experts to Sichuan earlier to visit the pig farms in Sichuan and collect samples of pork for testing. He urged the Administration to explain the situation clearly to the public, in order to restore public confidence in meat consumption.

45. SHWF reiterated that *Streptococcus suis* was commonly found in pigs and pork. In spite of this, it would be quite safe to handle raw meat irrespective of whether it was defrosted, as long as the safety procedure was followed, for example,

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any wound of the handler should be properly treated and covered. He stressed that it would not pose a risk to human health if the pork was properly handled and cooked before consumption.

46. AD/FEHD supplemented that as the bacteria was commonly found in the throats of pigs, there would be a higher risk of infection when slaughtering pigs, as there was a higher chance of getting into contact with the secretions of pigs during slaughtering. However, pork handling involved a lower risk of infection.

47. Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509), infection by *Streptococcus suis* was an occupational disease and was required to be reported to the Commissioner for Labour. According to the statistics of the Hospital Authority in 2004-2005, a total of nine patients were infected by *Streptococcus suis*. Among them, four were related to the food business, i.e. one was a pig slaughter, two meat sellers and one dim sum worker. Dr KWOK expressed concern that the dim sum worker, who was not involved in frontline jobs of handling pork, was also infected. He sought information on the measures the Administration would take to protect the safety of workers who had to handle pigs and pork at work.

48. Acting Consultant/Community Medicine (Communicable Disease) of DH clarified that according to the Labour Department's statistics, seven cases of *Streptococcus suis* were reported during the period from 1994 to 2004. These seven patients included slaughterhouse workers, cooks and workers who processed meat. DH was examining cases in which the patients concerned who were not infected in the course of work. To promote safety at work, the Labour Department had produced pamphlets and booklets to educate workers handling pigs and meat the safety measures to protect themselves from infection by *Streptococcus suis*.

49. Dr Joseph LEE said that in view of the high mortality rate of the disease in Sichuan, the public was concerned whether it was safe to consume pork, especially when 40% of the frozen meat exported from Sichuan was designated for Hong Kong. Dr LEE said that he was disappointed that the Administration had done very little to safeguard public health. He enquired about the measures the Administration had taken in the past 20 days to prevent meat handlers and housewives from being infected by *Streptococcus suis*.

50. DD/FEHD replied that immediately after MoH had notified HKSAR that *Streptococcus suis* was identified as the agent of the epidemic, the Administration had strengthened the inspection and quarantine measures in respect of imported live pigs and meat. FEHD had also distributed pamphlets to food industry workers to provide information on the proper and safe procedures in handling raw meat. FEHD had issued letters to collectors of pig carcasses and operators of licensed food businesses requesting them to remind their staff to wear protective clothing and observe personal hygiene. FEHD had also uploaded Safety Tips on Handling Pork on its website to promote public awareness.

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51. In response to Dr Joseph LEE, DD/FEHD clarified that the preventive measures mentioned in paragraph 50 above applied to both fresh and frozen meat.

Motion proposed by Mr Andrew CHENG

52. Mr Andrew CHENG proposed the following motion which was seconded by Dr KWOK Ka-ki –

“鑑於內地四川省資陽市及內江市發生多宗國民感染致命性豬鏈球菌而引致的嚴重傷亡事件，本會促請特區政府在疫情未能有效控制及充份瞭解散播途徑前，須立即採取有效措施，停止入口該省份的冷藏豬肉。”

[English translation

“In view of the severity of the incidents causing casualties in a number of fatal Streptococcus suis infection cases in Ziyang City and Neijiang City of Sichuan Province of the Mainland, this Panel urges the SAR Government to take effective measures immediately to suspend the import of frozen pork from that province, until the outbreak can be effectively controlled and the means of transmission clearly understood.”]

53. Mr CHENG explained that he was worried that Sichuan might resume export of pork to Hong Kong even when the epidemic had not subsided. He considered that the Administration should take the initiative to suspend import of pork from Sichuan until the epidemic was under control.

54. At the request of Mr Tommy CHEUNG, the Chairman suspended the meeting for five minutes to enable members to discuss among themselves the motion proposed by Mr Andrew CHENG.

(The meeting resumed at 4:16 pm.)

55. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that he supported the motion proposed by Mr Andrew CHENG as he considered that LegCo Members should clearly express their position by passing the proposed motion.

56. Mr WONG Yung-kan expressed support for the motion. He informed members that after discussing the situation with the trade, he had urged the Administration to suspend the import of pork from Sichuan on 26 July 2005. He added that if import of pork from Sichuan was to be resumed in future, the Administration should tighten control by conducting more tests on the meat.

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57. The Chairman put Mr Andrew CHENG's motion to vote. The outcome was that five members voted for the motion and no member voted against the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed.

58. SHWF assured members that the HKSAR Government all along attached great importance to safeguarding public health, and it would continue to closely monitor the development of the epidemics in Sichuan and other areas.

59. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:25 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 April 2006