

立法會
Legislative Council

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LC Paper No. CB(2) 1548/05-06
(These minutes have been seen by
the Administration)

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of Meeting
held on Tuesday, 14 February 2006 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 TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, JP
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki

Member absent : Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo

Public officers attending : Item IV
Mr Vincent LIU
Acting Deputy Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) /
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 2
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Dr Y Y HO
Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and
Communication)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item V

Mr Vincent LIU
Acting Deputy Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) /
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 2
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Wallace LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Gregory LEUNG
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Ms Rhonda LO
Assistant Director (Operations) 3
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Item VI

Mr Vincent LIU
Acting Deputy Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) /
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 2
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Wallace LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary (Food & Environmental Hygiene) 1
Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

Mr Gregory LEUNG
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

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

Staff in Attendance : Miss Betty MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)1

Ms Anna CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2)5

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I Confirmation of minutes of meeting

[LC Paper No. CB(2) 1068/05-06]

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2006 were confirmed.

II Date of next meeting and items for discussion

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1069/05-06(01) and (02)]

2. The Chairman said that the regular meeting originally scheduled for 14 March 2006 at 2:30 pm would be re-scheduled to 8:30 am on the same day, to avoid clashes with the special meetings of the Finance Committee in that afternoon.

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the meeting on 14 March 2006 –

- (a) Proposed amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169); and
- (b) Demerit points system for licensed food premises.

[*Post-meeting note:* An additional discussion item on “Progress of the comprehensive plan to deal with the global problem of Avian Influenza” was added to the agenda of the meeting on 14 March 2006.]

III Information paper(s) issued since last meeting

4. Members noted that the Administration had not provided any information paper since the last meeting.

IV Anti-mosquito Campaign 2006

[LC Paper No. CB(2) 1069/05-06(03)]

5. The Chairman invited representatives of the Administration to explain the differences between the Anti-mosquito Campaign 2006 and that conducted in 2005.

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6. Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication)/ Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (Consultant/FEHD) responded that the effectiveness of the Anti-mosquito Campaign 2005 was reflected by the lowest Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) and Monthly Ovitrap Index (MOI) recorded since the survey was launched in 2000. Consultant/FEHD pointed out that as mosquito breeding started in February and reached the peak in June, the Administration would maintain early commencement of Phase 1 of the 2006 campaign in February and extend the duration of Phase 2 from eight weeks to 10 weeks to straddle the peak season of mosquito activity.
7. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that the scrutiny work of the Public Health and Municipal Services (Amendment) Bill 2005 would be completed shortly. As the legislative proposal was to facilitate anti-mosquito actions, Mr CHEUNG asked whether the existing pest control staff would be able to cope with the increase in work following the passage of the Bill.
8. Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Food and Environmental Hygiene) (Ag) (DS(FEH)(Ag)) said that the purpose of the Bill was to confer additional powers on the Administration to deal with the mosquito problem in areas such as abandoned huts, dilapidated building structures and deserted farmlands. DS(FEH)(Ag) further said that there were over 1 000 district pest control staff, and some of them were contract staff. Additional contract staff would be engaged for anti-mosquito operations in the rainy season if there was such a need.
9. Mr TAM Yiu-chung noted from the Administration's paper that of the 180 batches of adult *Culex tritaeniorhynchus* sent for laboratory tests, five batches were found positive for Japan encephalitis (JE) virus. As all the five batches of samples were collected in Yuen Long, Mr TAM asked whether the Administration had monitored the health conditions of Yuen Long residents and whether it would step up anti-mosquito publicity targeted at Yuen Long residents.
10. Consultant/FEHD said that FEHD had conducted a territory-wide JE vector survey between October 2004 and October 2005 to map out the vector distribution and detect the presence of JE virus in local mosquito population. The results revealed that no parts of Hong Kong were considered to be high risk areas for the transmission of JE. However, the five batches of samples found positive for the JE virus were all collected in Yuen Long where there were pig farms and migratory birds, and pigs and birds were known hosts. Consultant/FEHD further said that FEHD had stepped up the anti-mosquito actions in areas where *Culex tritaeniorhynchus* were found. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department had also stepped up surveillance of pig farms.

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11. Noting that there were only two JE cases reported in 2005, Mr WONG Yung-kan asked whether it was due to improvements in hygienic conditions of pig farms. Mr WONG pointed out that despite heavy rainfall recorded in the third quarter of 2005, the MOI in the corresponding period was not particularly high. He asked about the anti-mosquito actions taken by the Administration in 2005.

12. Consultant/FEHD responded that the number of JE cases had reduced from five local cases in 2004 to two cases (one local and one imported case) in 2005. This was mainly because of increased awareness of the local population, including pig farmers, of the potential risk of dengue fever and JE, and concerted efforts made by the community and government departments in anti-mosquito actions. Consultant/FEHD said that the Anti-Mosquito Campaign 2006 would continue to increase public awareness and encourage community participation in anti-mosquito actions.

V Importation of chilled meat

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1069/05-06(04) & (05)]

13. The Chairman said that two submissions from “港九新界鮮肉運輸屠宰聯席會議” and Hong Kong Chilled Meat and Association had been received.

14. The Chairman said that the Panel had put forward the proposal of “one licence for one shop” when the proposed arrangements for import of chilled pork from the Mainland was discussed last year. The Chairman asked whether the difference in legal opinion given to the Panel and to the Administration had been resolved.

15. Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (DFEH) explained that the Administration had no policy objection to the proposal of separating the sale of fresh meat and chilled meat. As the proposal would require amendment to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, the Administration would liaise with the Department of Justice (DoJ) to proceed with the drafting of the legislative amendments, if the Panel was in support of the proposal.

16. Referring to the submission from “港九新界鮮肉運輸屠宰聯席會議”, the Chairman asked the Administration whether the supply of chilled pork must come from authorised pig farms in the Mainland, and whether the inspection mechanism had been established.

17. DFEH responded that since 2004, the Administration had been discussing with the Mainland the arrangements for supplying chilled pork to Hong Kong. According to the Mainland authorities, all the pig farms in the Mainland were subject to similar hygiene requirements, but authorised farms for supplying live pigs to Hong Kong would adopt the standards of Hong Kong. The Mainland authorities had indicated that as a start, chilled pork should be supplied by authorised farms which supplied live pigs to Hong Kong. DFEH said that the Administration had requested to inspect the

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chilled pork processing plants and their associated farms in the Mainland. A list of four processing plants had been provided by the Mainland, and FEHD had inspected three of them and found them acceptable for supplying chilled pork to Hong Kong. Inspection of the fourth processing plant would be arranged later.

18. DFEH further said that chilled pork for supply to Hong Kong must meet the inspection and quarantine requirements of Hong Kong. He believed that the Mainland authorities would promulgate the arrangements for supplying chilled pork to Hong Kong after agreement had been reached with Hong Kong.

19. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that Members belonging to the Liberal Party did not object to the proposal of “one licence for one shop”. He asked whether the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland would commence only after the “one licence for one shop” proposal was implemented. If that was the case, chilled pork from other places would have to be suspended as well, pending implementation of the “one licence for one shop” proposal.

20. DFEH said that it would take time to introduce the legislative amendments to implement the “one shop for one licence” proposal. The Administration wished to seek the views of the Panel as to whether it supported importation of chilled pork from selected plants in the Mainland. He informed members that the supply of chilled pork could commence shortly after Hong Kong had informed the Mainland authorities of the decision.

21. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that as Hong Kong was importing chilled pork from other places, he could not see why chilled pork from the Mainland should not be allowed to be imported, if such imports could meet Hong Kong’s requirements. He would support the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland, if FEHD could take effective enforcement actions against the sale of chilled meat as fresh meat at retail level. Mr CHEUNG asked about the enforcement statistics in this connection. He also asked whether FEHD could cope with the increase in enforcement work, if chilled pork was to be imported from the Mainland.

22. DFEH said that imported chilled pork represented less than 2% of the total consumption of pork in the first 10 months in 2005. As FEHD had conducted inspection of only three chilled pork processing plants in the Mainland, he envisaged that only a small quantity of chilled pork would be supplied from the Mainland initially.

23. Assistant Director (Operations)3/FEHD (AD(Ops)3/FEHD) said that since 2003, FEHD had taken enforcement actions against 37 fresh provision shop licensees and FEHD market stall tenants for breaching the licensing/tenancy conditions for selling chilled meat as fresh meat. In these cases, 18 of them were successful cases for consideration of cancellation of fresh provision shop licences or termination of FEHD market stall tenancies. Some cases were still under process. For the other

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cases, some of them were allowed after making appeals to the appeal tribunals, while some other cases could not be proceeded with because of insufficient evidence.

24. In reply to the Chairman, AD(Ops)3/FEHD said that 12 of the 37 cases mentioned above were cases in 2005. Enforcement actions were taken during FEHD's routine inspections and upon consumers' complaints.

25. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong supported the "one licence for one shop" proposal, so that fresh meat and chilled meat would be sold at different premises for better protection of public health and consumers' interest. He pointed out that at present many shops sold both fresh and chilled pork at the same premises, and it was difficult for consumers to detect whether the fresh meat they bought was actually defrosted chilled meat. Mr WONG added that the Panel had passed a motion last year urging the Administration to amend the legislation to provide for the "one licence for one shop" arrangement. He said that should the Administration have taken actions to amend the legislation at that time, it would now be ready to import chilled pork from the Mainland. He found it unacceptable for the Administration to advise the Panel, one year after the motion was passed, that the Administration would take the proposal further with DoJ subject to members' support.

26. DFEH said that he was most willing to liaise with DoJ to accord priority to the legislative amendment. As far as technical arrangements were concerned, the Administration was now ready to inform the Mainland authorities to prepare for supplying chilled pork to Hong Kong, while legislative amendments were being made to implement the "one licence for one shop" proposal. DFEH further said that if DoJ did not need to take a long time to draft the legislation, the Administration could defer the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland, subject to the Panel's views.

27. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that the traders did not object to the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland, but they considered that chilled pork and fresh pork should not be allowed to be sold at the same premises in order to better safeguard consumers' interest and public health. He considered that chilled pork from the Mainland should only be allowed to be sold at local market after the legislation requiring the sale of fresh meat and chilled meat under separate licences and at different premises had been introduced.

28. Mr Vincent FANG said that he supported in principle the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland, since chilled pork was currently imported from other places. However, Mr FANG expressed concern about the enforcement against selling chilled meat as fresh meat, as the problem would worsen after chilled pork from the Mainland was allowed to be imported into Hong Kong. Mr FANG asked whether there would be a regular inspection and monitoring system for the pig farms and the meat processing plants in the Mainland. He considered that there should be a comprehensive plan for the regulation of chilled pork, to ensure that such pork could

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not pose any health risk to consumers.

29. The Chairman asked whether the Administration had confidence that the importation arrangements could ensure the safety of imported chilled pork and adequately safeguard public health.

30. DFEH said that Hong Kong had been discussing with the Mainland for more than a year the sanitary requirements and the mechanism for supplying chilled pork to Hong Kong. FEHD had also conducted inspections to the chilled pork processing plants and their associated farms in the Mainland. The Administration was now ready to accept imports of chilled pork from selected plants in the Mainland. DFEH further said that under the existing quarantine and import arrangements, the first few batches of imported chilled pork would be subject to the “hold and test” arrangement at the border, and the subsequent imports would be subject to monitoring under the regular food surveillance system and random food sample testing. As regards the legislative amendments to implement the “one licence for one shop” proposal, DFEH said that the Administration would discuss with DoJ to expedite the drafting process and would revert to the Panel as soon as possible.

31. Mr Vincent FANG asked about the estimated amount of chilled pork to be imported from the Mainland and the impact on local pig farmers and traders. The Chairman also asked about the impact on the pattern of pork consumption in Hong Kong.

32. DFEH responded that as Hong Kong practised free trade, there was no quota or prohibition on import of chilled pork into Hong Kong, as long as the import and quarantine requirements were met. It would be for the market to determine the amount of chilled pork to be imported. It was envisaged that the initial imports would be small, given the limited capacity of the three or four chilled pork processing plants in the Mainland which were ready for supplying chilled pork to Hong Kong. DFEH advised that the consumption of fresh pork and frozen pork each represented 49% of the total pork consumption at present. It would be the commercial decision of local importers whether to import chilled pork or frozen pork in future.

33. Mr TAM Yiu-chung shared the views expressed by Mr WONG Yung-kan and Mr Vincent FANG. Mr TAM said that DFEH’s remarks on the “one licence for one shop” proposal was self-conflicting, as the Administration had not taken any action to implement the proposal in the past year, while claiming that it had no objection to the proposal. Mr TAM said that members did not object to the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland. However, those imported from Thailand had posed problem as some chilled meat was sold as fresh meat. He considered that the Administration should first resolve this problem by introducing legislation for the “one licence for one shop” arrangement, before allowing importation of chilled pork from the Mainland.

34. Dr Joseph LEE said that Members did not object to the importation of chilled

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pork from the Mainland as chilled meat was currently being imported from other places. However, if the control at retail level posed problem, the Administration should implement the “one licence for one shop” proposal to solve the problem. Dr LEE asked when the Administration would be able to introduce the legislation for effecting the “one licence for on shop” proposal and whether the existing manpower could cope with the increase in enforcement work.

35. DFEH responded that he would discuss with DoJ about expediting the drafting work of the legislation on the “one licence for one shop” proposal. He would revert to the Panel on the legislative timetable and any difficulties encountered. DFEH assured members that FEHD would continue to take enforcement actions against the sale of chilled meat as fresh meat, irrespective of whether the “one licence for one shop” proposal was in place.

36. Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed disappointment that the Administration had not taken any action on the “one licence for one shop” proposal in the past year. Dr KWOK said that while he agreed that the Administration should expedite the introduction of the legislative amendments, he disagreed that importation of chilled pork from the Mainland should await the implementation of the “one licence for one shop” arrangement. Given that chilled pork was already imported from other places, he saw no reason, except on grounds of food safety, for not allowing importation chilled pork from the Mainland. He considered it unfair to withhold the supply of chilled pork from the Mainland simply because the Administration had yet to improve control at the retail level.

37. Dr KWOK asked whether the Administration was satisfied with the hygiene requirements and quality of chilled pork to be supplied from the Mainland; and if so, whether deferring importation of chilled pork from the Mainland would constitute unfair trading arrangements. To solve the problem of posing chilled pork for sale as fresh pork, Dr KWOK suggested that the Administration could require chilled pork to be packaged and labelled for sale at retail level. Such a requirement would also facilitate FEHD staff in checking whether the chilled pork was stored at a temperature under 4°C.

38. DFEH explained that currently the food labelling requirements only applied to pre-packaged food, and Hong Kong did not require meat to be packaged and labelled for sale at retail market. DFEH further explained that there was already a mechanism for approving applications of import of chilled pork and other food products. As no chilled pork had been imported from the Mainland before, the Administration had to discuss with the Mainland authorities to agree on the inspection, quarantine and hygiene arrangements for chilled pork destined for Hong Kong. FEHD would conduct inspections to the facilities, operation, production process and the hygiene monitoring system of chilled pork processing plants and their associated farms in the Mainland. DFEH said that FEHD staff had inspected three chilled pork processing plants in the Mainland, and was ready to accept applications for import of chilled pork

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from these plants.

39. DFEH further said that currently the licence for selling meat already specified the types of meat (i.e. fresh/chilled/frozen) to be sold at the premises. As the Administration was considering ways to further streamline the food business licensing system and was contemplating a composite licence for certain kinds of foods, to take forward the “one licence for one shop” proposal might depart from these policies. Nevertheless, in view of the unique circumstances relating to the regulation of chilled pork, the Administration had no policy objection to the proposal of granting separate licences for the sale of chilled pork and fresh pork. Dr KWOK’s suggestion of requiring the chilled pork to be packaged and labelled would be taken into consideration in taking forward the proposal.

40. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that as chilled pork from the Mainland and from other places was subject to the same hygiene requirements, it was unreasonable to withhold the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland on grounds that the “one licence for one shop” proposal had not been implemented. Such a differential treatment would give rise to trade disputes. Dr KWOK considered that the Administration should strengthen enforcement against the malpractice of selling chilled pork as fresh pork, pending introduction of the legislation on the “one licence for one shop” proposal.

41. The Chairman said that Members belonging to the Democratic Party considered that food safety and public health were the most important considerations in taking a decision on importation of foods into Hong Kong. If the chilled pork would only come from authorised pig farms in the Mainland and if FEHD could exercise control at source by conducting inspections to the farms and plants concerned, he saw no reason of not allowing chilled pork to be imported from the Mainland. The Chairman added that consuming chilled pork was more environmentally friendly than consuming frozen pork, as it took five tonnes of water to defrost one tonne of frozen meat.

42. The Chairman further said that some members had reservations about the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland because the problem of posing chilled pork for sale as fresh pork had not been solved. The Chairman considered that importation of chilled pork from the Mainland and implementation of the “one licence for one shop” arrangement were two separate matters. The Administration could commence processing applications for import of chilled pork from the Mainland, while enhancing enforcement actions at the retail level. The Chairman also urged the Administration to expedite introduction of the legislation on the “one licence for one shop” proposal.

43. Mr WONG Yung-kan commented that the Administration should not put the responsibility on the Panel in deciding whether to allow import of chilled pork from the Mainland. Mr WONG reiterated that he did not object to the importation of chilled pork from the Mainland, but he was concerned about the lack of progress in

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solving the problem of some retailers selling chilled as fresh meat, as the issue had been raised as early as 1998. He considered it necessary to introduce legislation to implement the “one licence for one shop” proposal in order to better protect public health.

44. Mr WONG further said that he was concerned about the monitoring system after the initial imports. He pointed out that chilled meat would easily deteriorate if not stored under 4°C. Under the present regulatory framework, it was not possible to trace and recall the problematic pork as it would have been sold and no sales records were available. It would be unfair to the consumers and those traders who had followed the licensing requirements. He considered that the Administration should have solved the problem had it taken prompt action after his motion on “one licence for one shop” was passed at the Panel meeting on 11 January 2005. Mr WONG reiterated that he would fully support the import of chilled pork from the Mainland if the Administration would take immediate action to introduce legislation to implement the “one licence for one shop” proposal.

45. DFEH clarified that the Administration had not put the responsibility on the Panel in deciding whether to import chilled pork from the Mainland. He said that it was the Administration’s responsibility to ensure food safety and safeguard public health. On the tracking of chilled pork in the supply chain, the Administration might consider requiring the wholesalers and retailers to keep sales invoices for a certain period.

46. The Chairman concluded that the Panel agreed that the Administration should introduce the legislation on the “one licence for one shop” proposal immediately. However, the Panel did not have a consensus view on whether importation of chilled pork from the Mainland should wait after the legislation had been put in place. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide a written response, before the next regular meeting of the Panel on 14 March 2006, on the timetable for introducing the legislation for the “one licence for one shop” proposal.

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47. DFEH said that he would convey members’ views to the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food for consideration.

VI Timetable for introducing legislative proposals

[LC Paper No. CB(2) 1069/05-06(06)]

48. The Chairman noted that the Administration planned to introduce only one piece of legislation relating to food safety and environmental hygiene in the current session, and nine pieces of such legislation in the next session. The Chairman asked why these legislative proposals were bunched in the next session, as most of the proposals had been discussed by the Panel for some time.

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49. DS(FEH)(Ag) responded that the list for the current session had not included the Public Health and Municipal Services (Amendment) Bill 2005 which had been introduced and was being examined by the Legislative Council (LegCo). As for the other legislative proposals, DS(FEH)(Ag) said that there were divergent views when the Panel and stakeholders were consulted on some of these proposals, such as the proposals on regulation and monitoring of imported fish, and control of fishing activities/conservation of fisheries resources. The Administration would need to further examine these proposals with a view to formulating a package of measures to address the concerns of various parties. DS(FEH)(Ag) further said that the drafting of some of these proposals was underway. The Administration would endeavour to advance the timing of introducing some of these legislative proposals into LegCo if possible.

50. The Chairman urged the Administration to expedite the introduction of the legislative proposals into LegCo and to avoid bunching in the next session. He expressed concern that there might not be Bills Committee slots towards the end of the next session, and the scrutiny of these legislative proposals might be delayed. DS(FEH)(Ag) advised that some of these legislative proposals would be in the form of subsidiary legislation and they would be subject to the negative vetting procedure.

51. Referring to the proposed legislation to regulate poultry slaughtering plant, the Chairman asked whether it was related to the implementation of central slaughtering of live poultry.

52. DS(FEH)(Ag) responded that the Administration was actively exploring the idea of developing a poultry slaughtering plant in Hong Kong and was identifying a suitable location in the New Territories for establishing such a plant. It would be necessary to amend the Poultry (Slaughtering for Export) Regulations (Cap. 139E) to put in place a licensing regime for the operation of the future slaughtering plant. The legislation would also include the design and hygiene of the plant, slaughtering equipment as well as slaughtering and inspection processes.

53. Mr Vincent FANG said that the Administration had advocated the segregation of humans from live poultry in retail markets. In this connection, the poultry retailers had made alterations to the layout of their poultry stalls in order to comply with the requirements. If the Administration was to proceed with central or regional slaughtering of live poultry, the investment made by poultry retailers would be wasted.

54. DS(FEH)(Ag) said that it was the Administration's policy to segregate humans from live poultry, and central slaughtering would be able to achieve complete segregation. Before implementation of the central or regional slaughtering proposal, live chickens would still be sold at retail markets and the existing arrangements for segregating humans from live poultry at retail markets would remain in force.

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55. The Chairman said that the Panel was informed on previous occasions that the Administration had identified a suitable location in the Western Wholesale Food Market for the development of a medium sized slaughterhouse on a pilot basis. However, according to recent media reports, the Administration had identified a suitable location in the New Territories for developing such a plant. The Chairman said that the Administration should brief the Panel on the latest developments at the next meeting scheduled for 14 March.

56. DS(FEH)(Ag) said that the Administration would be in a better position to provide concrete information on the location for establishing a poultry slaughtering plant in April 2006.

57. The Chairman considered that it would be more appropriate for the Panel to discuss the proposal of central/regional slaughtering of chickens before the Administration had taken a decision on the matter.

58. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that the poultry traders had been co-operative in adopting measures to prevent avian influenza outbreaks. The measures had proven effective as there was no outbreak of avian influenza among local poultry in the past few years. He considered it unreasonable for the Administration to pursue the proposal of central/regional slaughtering of chickens as it would wipe out the local poultry industry.

59. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that while he supported the development of a central or regional slaughtering plant for poultry, live poultry industry might still be allowed in Hong Kong. Dr KWOK further said that he did not want to see recurrence of avian influenza outbreaks and mass culling of live poultry in Hong Kong. He supported early discussion of the proposal of central/regional slaughtering, to avoid polarisation of views of different sectors of the community at a late stage.

60. Mr Vincent FANG said that the business sector did not find the proposal of establishing a slaughtering plant in Hong Kong attractive. He pointed out that if the proposed slaughtering plant was to be located in the New Territories, there was little time difference in delivering freshly slaughtered chickens from over the border and from the slaughtered plant in Hong Kong. Since slaughtered chickens supplied by the Mainland would be cheaper than those supplied by the local plant, he considered that the local plant would not be viable.

61. The Chairman said that the Administration should brief the Panel on the progress of the comprehensive plan to deal with avian influenza outbreak, in particular the Administration's decision on the long-term direction on central or regional slaughtering of chickens, at the next Panel meeting in March 2006. To allow more time for discussion, the meeting would last for about two and a half hours. Members agreed.

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62. Mr WONG Yung-kan added that the Administration should also provide information on the proposed implementation timetable and the impact on the wet markets, if the proposal of regional/central slaughtering of live poultry was to be taken forward.

VII Any other business

63. The meeting ended at 4:20 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
28 March 2006