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12 December 2005

Secretariat of LegCo Panel on Food Safety
and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Building,
8 Jackson Road, Central,
Hong Kong
(Attention: Mrs Constance LI)
(Fax: 2509 0775)

Dear Mrs LI,

I refer to the members' inquiry about the new cooperation arrangement signed between the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB) and the State General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) for exchanges and collaboration on food safety, inspection and quarantine of animals and plants as well as sanitary and phytosanitary measures at the joint meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene and the Panel on Environmental Affairs on 29 November. The information requested is as follows:

The HWFB and the AQSIQ signed an agreement for new cooperation arrangement in Beijing on 23 August 2005 to further enhance exchanges and collaboration between the Mainland and Hong Kong with regard to food safety, inspection and quarantine of animals and plants as well as sanitary and phytosanitary measures. New measures have been added under the new arrangement. For instance, Hong Kong will gradually enhance the control at source by sending staff to inspect crop and animal farms in the Mainland on an ad hoc basis to ensure that the food and farm products supplied to Hong Kong are safe and hygienic.

The Mainland and Hong Kong will also discuss the adoption of unified procedures, methods and standards for inspection and quarantine. We will also enhance coordination in combating illegal import and export and collaboration in managing inspection and quarantine at the international level.

As for cooperation at regional level, the Guangdong, Shenzhen and Zhuhai Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureaux will continue to hold regular meetings on the safety and hygiene assurance of food supplied to Hong Kong with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the Department of Health of Hong Kong. Ad hoc operational meetings and information exchange meetings on sanitary and phytosanitary issues for imports and exports will also be held to further strengthen our communication and coordination.

Under the agreement, the Mainland and Hong Kong will continue to exchange information and experience on legislation, regulations, standards and management regarding food, animals, plants and their products. We will also organize technical experts and management staff to the other party for technical exchanges, studies and visits.

Please feel free to contact me if further information is required. .

Yours sincerely,

(Wallace Lau)
for Secretary of Health, Welfare and Food Bureau