立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2810/07-08
(These minutes have been seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 8 July 2008, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

Members present	:	Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP (Chairman) Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP (Deputy Chairman) Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, JP Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Public officers attending	:	Item III and IV Food and Health Bureau Ms Olivia NIP Sai-lan Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) Item III Food and Health Bureau Mr Owin FUNG Ho-yin Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)3 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department Dr Philip HO Yuk-yin Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and

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Communication)

Item IV

Food and Health Bureau

Mr Francis HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)2

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine)

Dr Kenny HO Chin-ho
Senior Veterinary Officer (Technical Services) (Acting)

Clerk in attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice LEUNG
Senior Council Secretary (2)1

Ms Anna CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2)2

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I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)2547/07-08 and CB(2)2537/07-08]

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 May and 10 June 2008 were confirmed.

II. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Regulation and labelling of genetically modified food

Presentation by the Administration

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3. With the aid of powerpoint, Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD) briefed members on the findings of the evaluation study on the effectiveness of the "Guidelines on voluntary labelling of genetically modified (GM) food" (the Guidelines). The findings of the evaluation study were detailed in the report at Annex 2 to the Administration paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)2503/07-08(01)]. He pointed out that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), GM food currently traded on the international market were not likely, nor had been shown, to present risks for human health. The approaches adopted for GM food labelling also varied to a great extent among different countries and areas. There was presently no consensus on GM food labelling in the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and it was unlikely that internationally common standards could be established in the near future. As regards GM food labelling in Hong Kong, Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD said that the Administration worked jointly with the food trade and introduced a set of voluntary GM food labelling guidelines in 2006. The Guidelines issued in July 2006 was at Annex 1 to the Administration's paper, which were applicable to prepackaged food, and the recommended practices were summarized as follows –

(a) to label food items with 5% or more GM materials in their food ingredients as "genetically modified" (positive labels);

(b) to provide additional information on the label if the GM food concerned had undergone significant modifications in specific aspect (e.g. animal gene introduced into food of plant origin); and

(c) not to use negative labels in absolute term (e.g. "GM free") and to use other forms of negative labels only when the declaration was substantiated by documentation.

4. On the evaluation study on the effectiveness of the Guidelines, Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD advised that the evaluation study comprised three parts: study on the trade's awareness and barriers/attitudes towards GM food labelling; market survey on the use of GM food labels; and laboratory verification of information on the GM food labels. As indicated in the questionnaires returned by the trade, the main reasons for traders not to adopt the voluntary labelling scheme were the absence of legal requirements, increase in production cost, and limited knowledge of GM food labelling. As regards the market survey which covered over 1 200 prepackaged food products, the results of the survey revealed that labels on GM status were present only on food that contained ingredients with GM counterparts. All the food samples indicating GM status (i.e. a total number of 14) carried negative labels and all of those negative labels from contactable traders were substantiated by documentation. Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD further advised that 46 samples of prepackged food containing ingredients that were most commonly genetically modified (i.e. corn and soya bean) were tested for GM content. Only one sample was found to contain more than 5% of GM material, and

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there was no GM food label on the food sample concerned.

5. Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD further said that the findings from the evaluation exercise illustrated that there was no pressing need for mandatory labelling. The Administration would step up its efforts in promoting the Guidelines to the trade and keep in view the international development in GM technology and GM food labelling standards in deciding on the future course of action.

6. Members noted that the Research and Library Services Division of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Secretariat had prepared a research report on GM food labelling in the European Union (EU) and selected places and a background brief entitled "Regulation and labelling of genetically modified food" was also prepared by the LegCo Secretariat for members' reference [LC Paper Nos. RP02/07-08 and CB(2)2503/07-08(02) respectively].

Findings of the evaluation study

7. Mr Alan LEONG commented that the findings of the evaluation study showed that the implementation of voluntary GM food labelling scheme was not effective. He failed to understand why the Administration could arrive at the view that more in-depth promotion of the Guidelines and education to the trade should be able to bring in more traders under the voluntary labelling scheme. In response, Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) (DS(FH)(Food) said that, while the results of the study on the trade's awareness and barriers/attitudes towards GM food labelling suggested that there was room for further improvement in the efforts made by the Administration to promote and educate the trade on the Guidelines, it did not imply that the Guidelines were not effective. Referring to the results of the laboratory tests to assess the use of GM material in food, she further said that, among the 46 prepackaged food samples tested, 34 of them did not carry GM food labels. Out of the 34 products without GM food label, only one did not follow the Guidelines' recommendation on providing GM food labelling for food with GM content at 5% or above.

8. Mr Alan LEONG, however, pointed out that, as stated in paragraph 9 of the Administration's paper, the Administration had conducted a market survey covering over 1 200 prepackaged food products on the use of GM food labels but only 14 samples carried negative labels. He queried why the Administration could draw a conclusion that the Guidelines were effective. DS(FH)(Food) explained that, having regard that corn and soya bean were the two GM crops that were most commonly used in food industry, 46 prepackaged food samples containing soya bean or corn as the main ingredient were taken for laboratory testing between August and September 2007 to assess the use of GM material in food and to validate the reliability of the information provided on the labels. She said that, among the 46 food samples tested, eight samples were detected with GM soya bean (i.e. Roundup Ready Soya). In seven of these samples, the level of Roundup Ready Soya detected was less than 5%. The other sample was found to contain 80%

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Roundup Ready Soya with respect to the total soya bean content. Under the Guidelines, food products with 5% or more GM materials in their food ingredients were recommended to be labelled as "genetically modified". The results indicated that food products containing GM materials above the 5% labelling threshold were not prevalent among the samples tested.

9. Referring to paragraph 20 of Annex 2 to the Administration's paper, the Deputy Chairman pointed out that, among the 46 samples tested, 34 of them did not carry GM food labels. He wondered whether the Administration had intentionally left out the details of the results of the market survey and laboratory tests in its paper. In response, DS(FH)(Food) stressed that the Administration had no intention to hide anything from members. The Administration's paper served to provide key findings and observations of the evaluation study for members' reference while more detailed information on the evaluation report was provided in Annex 2 to the Administration's paper. She reiterated that the threshold level currently applied in the Guidelines for labelling purpose was 5% in respect of individual food ingredient. Among the 46 samples of prepackaged food tested for GM soya bean or bean, only one sample was found to contain more than 5% of Roundup Ready Soya and there was no GM food label on the food sample concerned.

Implementation of a mandatory GM food labelling scheme

10. Mr Alan LEONG said that the implementation of a mandatory GM food labelling scheme could assist consumers in making informed food choices. Given that the experience of implementing the voluntary Guidelines was unsuccessful in Hong Kong, he considered that the Administration should introduce a mandatory GM food labelling scheme. Mr LEONG further said that, to his knowledge, 54 countries had already adopted mandatory labelling systems for GM food. He queried why the Administration was reluctant to make reference to the experience of these countries in deciding on its way forward in respect of GM food labelling.

11. DS(FH)(Food) responded that, while it was important to facilitate consumers' right to make informed food choices, it was equally important to strike a proper balance between the interests of the food trade and the community. She said that a regulatory impact assessment (RIA) study on the labelling of GM food in Hong Kong was conducted in 2002 and five options (including options of adopting a threshold level of 5% or 1%) for labelling prepackged GM food were considered in the study. The findings of RIA report revealed that there would be additional cost to the trade, in particular the small and medium sized companies, if a mandatory labelling scheme was to be implemented. DS(FH)(Food) further said that, given that Hong Kong relied heavily on imported food, there would be impact on food choices to Hong Kong people and the food trade if food products would be withdrawn from the market after the introduction of the mandatory GM food labelling scheme. As regards Mr LEONG's view on making reference to overseas experience, DS(FH)(Food) said that, in drawing up a food regulatory policy, public

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health and food safety were always the primary concern of the Administration. However, different countries and areas at present had adopted different practices on GM food labelling. Each individual country or area formulated its policy and system based on its own situation, including food safety, consumers' right to information, protection of local agricultural market, economy and trade, and conservation of ecological environment, etc.

12. Mr WONG Yung-kan said that, while he considered it important to protect consumer's right to know, he was also concerned about the impact on the food trade. He pointed out that, with the coming into operation of the new legislation on nutrition labelling on 1 July 2010, the food trade had to face with various problems in meeting the new labelling requirements. He was worried that, if a mandatory GM food labelling scheme was introduced now, there would be further adverse impact on the food trade. Mr WONG, however, stressed that, in the long run, a mandatory GM food labelling scheme should be implemented in Hong Kong. The Administration should therefore provide a timetable for introducing a mandatory labelling scheme. He also requested the Administration to provide information on countries which had adopted mandatory or voluntary GM food labelling scheme for the reference of members.

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13. DS(FH)(Food) responded that no definite timetable for the implementation of a mandatory GM food labelling scheme had been set at this stage. However, in the meantime, the Administration would carry out more in-depth promotion of the Guidelines and education to the trade so as to bring in more traders under the voluntary labelling scheme. The Administration would keep a close watch on the latest international development in respect of GM technology and GM food labelling standards in deciding on whether a mandatory labelling scheme for GM food should be introduced. On the current international practices on GM food labelling, Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD supplemented that, at present, the regulatory approach on GM food labelling varied in different countries and areas, and could be broadly classified as voluntary or mandatory. For the voluntary labelling approach, only GM food that was significantly different from its conventional counterpart, in terms of composition, nutritional value and allergenicity, needed to be labelled. The United States (the US) and Canada were examples of countries adopting this approach. For the mandatory approach, it could be further classified as two categories. i.e. "pan-labelling" or "labelling for designated products only". The "pan-labelling" category required that any food or food ingredients with GM materials above a threshold must be labelled. The EU, Australia and New Zealand were examples of countries adopting this approach. The "labelling for designated products only" category required that only the designated products which were genetically modified needed to be labelled. Countries and areas like Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the Mainland were adopting this approach.

14. Mr Vincent FANG said that, given that GM food had not been shown to pose risks to public health and in the absence of an international consensus on GM

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food labelling, he was supportive of the Administration's approach to continue to promote the Guidelines and encourage the food trade to participate in the voluntary labelling scheme. He added that the food trade had already faced great difficulties in meeting the mandatory nutrition labelling requirements and adjusting themselves to a new business environment. Mr FANG further said that, among the 54 countries which had GM food labelling requirements, many of the countries introduced a mandatory labelling scheme to protect their local agricultural market, economy and trade. He held the view that the Administration should only introduce a mandatory labelling scheme when Codex had set standards in respect of GM food labelling.

15. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked about the conditions under which the Administration would consider that there was a pressing need for adopting a mandatory GM food labelling scheme in Hong Kong. He commented that the Administration should not refrain from taking action until there were food safety incidents involving consumption of GM food products, posing health risks to the public, in Hong Kong. The Chairman also enquired whether the condition for the implementation of a mandatory GM food labelling system was the setting up of internationally agreed standards by Codex.

16. DS(FH)(Food) responded that, in considering the need to introduce a mandatory GM food labelling scheme in Hong Kong, the prime consideration of the Administration was food safety. In deciding on a policy relating to food labelling, the Administration had to strike a balance between the interests of the trade and the public so as to minimize impacts on food costs and food choices. She reiterated that, taking into account that GM food currently available on the international market had passed safety assessments and were not likely to present risks for human health, the Administration did not consider it necessary to introduce a mandatory labelling scheme at this stage. DS(FH)(Food) further said that, should Codex have set standards on GM food labelling, the Administration would consider seriously the need to adopt similar standards in Hong Kong. She, however, added that there was presently no consensus on GM food labelling in Codex and it was unlikely that internationally common standards could be established in the near future. Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD supplemented that, under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), any person who sold food that was unfit for human consumption, irrespective whether it was a GM food or not, was guilty of an offence and subject to a penalty of fine and imprisonment.

17. Given that many of the countries where Hong Kong had imported food products from had adopted mandatory GM food labelling requirements, Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed dissatisfaction and regret at the Administration's refusal to give a concrete timetable on the implementation of a mandatory GM food labelling scheme in Hong Kong.

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18. Dr Joseph LEE said that, if a mandatory GM food labelling scheme would not be implemented at this stage, he considered that the Administration should put in place appropriate measures to safeguard public's health and safety in the meantime, e.g. taking food samples for testing of GM materials on a regular basis. He asked the Administration to indicate clearly whether it would introduce a mandatory GM food labelling scheme in Hong Kong in the long run, and whether the Administration would take any measures to safeguard public's health and safety in the meantime. The Deputy Chairman shared the view of Dr LEE and considered that the Administration should advise members on its timetable or roadmap for the implementation of a mandatory GM food labelling scheme.

19. The Chairman said that the Liberal Party always considered it important to facilitate consumers making informed food choices. However, it was equally important that a fair balance between the interests of the trade and the protection of consumers' right to know. He further said that, while he shared the Administration's view that there was no pressing need to implement a mandatory GM food labelling scheme at this stage, he considered that the Administration should conduct more testing of food products, in particular food products containing the two most commonly used GM crops i.e. soya bean and corn.

20. In response, DS(FH)(Food) reiterated that there was no definite timetable at this stage. In deciding on the need to introduce a mandatory GM food labelling, the Administration would take into consideration all the factors, including the international development on GM food technology and labelling standards and local situation. As regards food samples for laboratory testing, DS(FH)(Food) said that the Centre for Food Safety would conduct inspection and testing of food samples, irrespective whether they were GM food or not, at the import, wholesale and retail levels every day, either under regular food surveillance programme or inspection of seasonal food items to ensure that food products supplied to Hong Kong were fit for human consumption.

21. On the Administration's response, the Chairman enquired about the time required for the laboratory testing for the 46 samples referred to in the report. He also enquired if the Administration would consider allocating more resources to conduct more samples testing for food containing GM materials.

22. In response, Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD said that, as Hong Kong allowed imports of any kinds of food, it was technically difficult to detect traces of GM materials in all types of imported food. It was in fact a complicated and difficult task to find out all the GM materials as well as their contents contained in a particular food product given that there were some 50 GM materials that were currently available in the international market. Given that food manufacturers might change its formula of food from time to time, information on the GM materials contained in certain food products might be outdated when the results of the tests were released to the public. It would be less costly and time-consuming if information on the types and contents of GM materials contained in a GM food

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product was provided voluntarily by the food manufacturer concerned. Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD further said that the laboratory test carried out by the Administration in the evaluation study was to detect traces of GM materials in respect of corn and soya bean, and the Government Laboratory had taken several months to conduct the tests. DS(FH)(Food) supplemented that the Administration would take note of members' views, and, in its next phase of promotion of the voluntary GM food labelling, would consider the ways in which consumers could obtain more information on the GM contents of food products.

23. The Deputy Chairman informed members that the Democratic Party had conducted public opinion surveys on GM food labelling in 2001, 2003 and 2008 respectively. The findings of the survey conducted in 2008 were generally consistent with that of the surveys conducted in 2001 and 2003. About 60% of the respondents indicated that they would not choose GM food products if sufficient information on the contents of GM materials contained in the food products concerned were provided. More than 60% of respondents indicated their acceptance of the introduction of a mandatory GM food labelling scheme and about 80% of respondents considered the Administration's promotion efforts inadequate. He said that he would pass on the findings of the survey to the Administration for consideration. The Deputy Chairman added that motions on introducing mandatory GM food labelling had been passed at various Legislative Council meetings and the Panel meetings.

24. Mr TAM Yiu-chung said that, while the Democratic Alliance for Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) attached great importance to the concern over the health risks of GM food posed to the public, it also recognized that there was no international consensus on the GM food labelling standards. Taking into consideration the recent introduction of a mandatory nutrition labelling scheme in Hong Kong, DAB considered that more time should be given to the food trade to adjust to the change. In the light of this, DAB agreed that there was no need to implement a mandatory GM food labelling scheme at this stage. However, he hoped that the Administration would update the Panel on any new development on GM food labelling.

Other issues discussed

25. Mr Alan LEONG said that Greenpeace had recently conducted a survey on eight popular snack product samples, and three of them contained GM ingredients but without GM food labelling. He considered that the public should have the right to know whether the food products contained any ingredients with GM materials, otherwise they could not make an informed food choice. Mr LEONG further said that, though there was no scientific evidence to suggest that GM food would pose a health risk to humans, some research studies showed that consumption of GM animal feed could be detrimental to the health of animals.

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26. The Deputy Chairman said that this was a worrying situation because the three snacks concerned were commonly sold in Hong Kong but all without GM labels to facilitate consumers in making informed food choices. He pointed out that, under the EU labelling requirements for GM food, it was illegal to put GM food on sale in the market if GM content could be detected in the product.

27. On the concern raised by the Deputy Chairman and Mr Alan LEONG, DS(FH)(Food) reiterated that, according to WHO, GM food currently sold on the international market had passed pre-sale safety assessments and were not likely, nor had been shown, to present risks for human health. There were presently no internationally common standards in respect of GM food labelling. As she had said earlier, the Administration would keep a close watch on the international development in GM technology and GM food labelling standards. As regards the Greenpeace's survey results, DS(FH)(Food) said that the GM maize ingredients found in the three snack samples concerned had been tested in the US, Canada and New Zealand. Consultant(CM)(RAC)/FEHD supplemented that, prior to introducing a new GM food into market, the GM food concerned should have passed pre-sale safety assessment including toxicity tests, food allergen tests and nutrient profile tests, etc. He added that food products containing GM maize ingredients had been available in the market for a considerable period of time and no reports on the health effects of consuming these GM food products had been received so far.

28. Both the Chairman and Mr Vincent FANG questioned why the Administration did not adopt a similar view in introducing a mandatory nutrition labelling scheme in Hong Kong. In response, DS(FH)(Food) clarified that the Administration had made reference to Codex nutrition labelling guidelines in formulating the mandatory nutrition labelling scheme. According to Codex guidelines, a nutrition label should include energy, protein, carbohydrates and fat, and any other nutrients that were relevant for maintaining a good nutritional status in the population concerned. Therefore, different countries could adopt different requirements having regard to their own public health needs. DS(FH)(Food) reiterated that, in formulating the mandatory "one plus seven" nutrition labelling scheme, the Administration had taken into consideration various factors, including local health situation, the needs of the public, impact on the food trade and implications on food choices, so as to come up with a scheme appropriate for our local situation.

Motion

29. The Deputy Chairman moved the following motion –

"鑒於基因改造食物多年來廣泛流入香港市面，可能對消費者的健康構成影響，現在推行的自願標籤制度亦未能為市民提供全面及有效的資

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訊。為保障公眾健康、消費者的知情權及選擇權，本委員會促請政府參考其他國家的經驗，盡快設立強制性的基因改造食物標籤制度。"

[English translation
"That, as genetically modified (GM) foods have entered Hong Kong widely over the years, which may have impact on the health of consumers, and the current voluntary labelling scheme fails to provide comprehensive and effective information to the public; for the sake of safeguarding public health and consumers' right to know and choose, this Panel urges the Government to draw reference from other countries' experience and introduce expeditiously a mandatory labelling scheme for GM food."]

30. The Chairman invited members to vote on the motion. The Deputy Chairman and Mr Alan LEONG voted for the motion. The Chairman, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr WONG Yung-kan and Mr Vincent FANG abstained from voting on the motion. The Chairman declared that the motion was passed by the Panel.

IV. Inspection and quarantine arrangement for the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Equestrian Events

Presentation by the Administration

31. With the aid of powerpoint presentation, Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine) of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AD(I&Q)/AFCD) briefed members on the equine inspection and quarantine arrangements for the 2008 Olympics and Paralympic Equestrian Events (the Equestrian Events), with details as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(2)2503/07-08(03)]. He said that AFCD was the veterinary authority for the import and export of animals in Hong Kong. In respect of the Equestrian Events, AFCD's responsibilities included stipulation of the import health requirements, issuing of health certificates, inspection and quarantine for the import and export of horse feed and bedding materials of plant origin; monitoring the conditions of stables; monitoring animal welfare of the horses; issue exhibition licence for the equestrian events; and providing administrative support to overseas equestrian team veterinarians in their applications to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong for practice approval during their stay in Hong Kong.

32. As regards the quarantine arrangements for equestrian horses, as outlined in paragraphs 8 to 12 of the Administration's paper, AD(I&Q)/AFCD advised that, before an equestrian horse could be exported to Hong Kong, it had to undergo a seven-day Pre-Export Quarantine (PEQ) in one of the 25 PEQ overseas stables approved by AFCD. Equestrian horses in the PEQ stables would be kept under close surveillance by competent veterinary authorities of the local governments. Upon arrival in Hong Kong, all equestrian horses must also undergo a 10-day Post-

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Arrival Isolation (PAI) in designated stables in Shatin. All equestrian horses would not be permitted to have any contact with local horses during their entire stay in Hong Kong. Access to stables was strictly controlled and biosecurity measures would apply to ensure that both equestrian and local horses would be adequately protected, and only authorized personnel were allowed entry.

33. AD(I&Q)/AFCD further said that, having regard to Hong Kong's hot and humid weather, all stables and isolation facilities were air-conditioned, and dedicated facilities would be provided for cooling horses at the competition avenues. As regards the liaison work in respect of the Equestrian Events, he advised that AFCD would work closely with the quarantine management team and clinical veterinary services of the Equestrian Company and Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC). Regular daily meetings with relevant stakeholders would be held during the Equestrian Events to enhance communications and to address any problems in a timely manner.

Issues discussed

34. The Chairman said that, to his understanding, track work for local horses for HKJC races would be resumed in Shatin in mid-July 2008. He was concerned about the risk of cross-infection among equestrian horses and local horses as equestrian horses might have the chance to contact local horses when they passed by the tracks where local racing horses underwent their exercise and training. He asked whether there would be any measures to prevent cross-infection between equestrian horses and local horses. The Chairman was also worried that equestrian horses would have to share vehicles with local horses when HKJC's races started in the new season in mid September.

35. AD(I&Q)/AFCD assured members that, upon arrival, all equestrian horses must undergo a 10-day PAI in designated air-conditioned stables in the Hong Kong Equestrian Venue in Shatin. All equestrian horses would not be permitted to have any contact with local horses during their entire stay in Hong Kong. However, they were allowed to train, exercise and complete during PAI. To prevent the possibility of spread of airborne diseases, equestrian horses would be separated by at least 100 metres from local horses. As regards the Chairman's concern over the sufficiency of vehicles for transporting equestrian horses, AD(I&Q)/AFCD said that a sufficient number of vehicles had been designated for transporting equestrian horses during the Equestrian Events. He added that, though the Paralympic Equestrian Events would be held between 7 and 12 September 2008, the number of horses to be participated in the Events was relatively smaller (i.e. some 70 horses) than that of the Olympic Equestrian Events (i.e. some 228 horses).

36. The Chairman enquired whether equestrian horses would pass by the training grounds for local horses when they travelled between the competition arena and the training facilities in the Penfold Park. He remained concerned that there might be a possibility of contact between local racing horses and equestrian

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horses. AD(I&Q)/AFCD responded that, in designing the Hong Kong Olympic Equestrian Venue in Shatin, they had already taken this into consideration and a particular route had been designated for equestrian horses to avoid any contact with local horses.

37. In response to the Chairman's question about the places where equestrian horses would be housed in case of sickness after arrival in Hong Kong, AD(I&Q)/AFCD explained that the affected horses would be moved into the isolation stables in Shatin immediately and prompt follow-up actions would be taken to prevent further spreading of diseases. As back-up measures, some of the HKJC's stables in Happy Valley would be reserved for such purpose.

38. In response to Mr WONG Yung-kan's enquiry as to whether there were any international standards on the quarantine requirements for horses, AD(I&Q)/AFCD explained that the quarantine requirements for equestrian horses were more stringent than that applied to overseas horses invited for HKJC's annual international races. He pointed out that, in the case of HKJC's annual international races, the number of overseas invited horses was relatively smaller (i.e. around 10 to 20 horses) and the duration of their stay was also shorter (i.e. around five to 10 days). AD(I&Q)/AFCD also advised that, before leaving the stables after the seven-day PEQ period, each equestrian horse must be examined by an official veterinarian of the competent quarantine authority of the country where the PEQ stable was located. The official veterinarian had to ensure that all conditions stated in the health certificates for exporting the horses to Hong Kong had been fulfilled. These conditions included vaccination against major infectious diseases or blood tests to ensure that the horses did not carry other non-infectious diseases. All equestrian horses were required to be vaccinated against or tested or examined for more than 20 major infectious diseases including equine influenza and equine infectious anaemia. If clinical signs of infectious diseases were suspected, the horse would have to be isolated and subject to further testing until it met all conditions stated in the health certificate. If the disease was confirmed, it would not be allowed to be exported to Hong Kong.

39. The Chairman enquired about the medical treatment facilities for equestrian horses during the Equestrian Events. In response, AD(I&Q)/AFCD said that a purpose-built equine clinic had been constructed at the venue for the Equestrian events to provide both immediate diagnostic and primary treatment services during the quarantine and Games period. HKJC's equine hospital, which comprised an operating theatre, associated anaesthetic induction, recovery rooms and a clinical laboratory, would also be on call throughout the Equestrian Events to handle any injuries and illnesses. If an equestrian horse suffered an injury requiring operation, it would be sent to HKJC's equine hospital for surgical veterinary treatment.

40. On the Administration's response, the Chairman expressed concern over the possibility of cross-contamination via shared facilities in HKJC's equine hospital. AD(I&Q)/AFCD responded that an emergency action plan including stringent

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isolation and disinfection procedures had been formulated and thorough cleansing and disinfection work would be carried out in the equine hospital and the paths that the injured horse had passed by. After operation, the injured equestrian horse would be sent back to its stable at Shatin for stall rest. When it was recovered, it would be returned to the place where it was based.

V. Any other business

41. The Chairman said that, as this was the last meeting of the Panel in the current term, he thanked the Deputy Chairman, Panel members and the Clerk for their support to the work of the Panel.

42. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:10 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
24 September 2008