

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 14 June 2011**

**Proposals to restrict the presence of prohibited substances in dried milk,  
condensed milk and reconstituted milk**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information relating to the proposals to restrict the presence of prohibited substances in dried milk, condensed milk and reconstituted milk and summarizes the concerns of Members about the safety of dairy products in relations to its additives.

**Background**

2. In August 2010, local media reported that a brand of infant formula dried milk sold in the Mainland had allegedly caused breast enlargement and other signs of puberty (i.e. precocious puberty) in female infants aged between 4 and 15 months in Hubei province. Mainland media reported that the medical tests indicated the levels of hormones in the babies who were fed with the brand exceeding those of the average adult woman. The Mainland Ministry of Health had demanded that the Hubei food safety supervision task force should investigate the incident and relevant authorities should conduct laboratory tests on samples from that brand. Test results confirmed that the babies had high hormone levels, but concluded that they did not have premature puberty.

3. In response to the public concerns about the suspected contamination of Mainland milk powder by sex hormone, the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") had also taken relevant samples from the local market for testing and all results were satisfactory. Nevertheless, the concerns about the presence of improper additives in dried milk have been raised.

4. According to a report issued by CFS in September 2010, it had been known that cows milk contains the natural female sex hormones. Of greater public health concerns are exogenous sex hormones, i.e. chemicals manufactured in laboratories that mimic functions of naturally occurring sex hormones. They are usually given to animals or humans for certain medical or other purposes, e.g. induction of ovulation to facilitate pregnancy. As some exogenous hormones are found to be carcinogenic to humans, international authorities usually exercise strict control over or even prohibition of the occurrence of such exogenous hormones in foods.

5. Under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), any food offered for sale on the market must be fit for human consumption. The Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF) ("the Regulations") prohibit the occurrence of three exogenous hormones, namely dienoestrol, diethylstilboestrol or hexoestrol, including salts and esters thereof, in any fish, meat or milk for sale for human consumption. Under the Regulations, "milk" means cows milk, buffaloes milk and goats milk, and includes cream, separated milk and milk beverage, but does not include dried milk, condensed milk or reconstituted milk.

### **Members' concerns**

6. At the Legislative Council ("LegCo") meeting on 4 March 2009, Hon Fred LI raised a question on the unapproved additives in dairy products. Mr LI was concerned about the Administration's follow-up actions to be taken after the Mainland authority ordered a manufacturer to stop adding to its dairy products two additives, i.e. osteoblast milk protein and insulin-like growth factor-1 which had not been approved for use in food products.

7. The Administration responded that the dairy products concerned had not been imported to Hong Kong. Sale of imported milk or milk beverage required the prior permission of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") under law. Approval would only be granted when FEHD had conducted detailed examination to ensure that the ingredients of the product, the heat treatment method and the product label complied with the local legislation. The two additives concerned were normal component in milk and their amounts were tested moderate. As the Codex Alimentarius Commission had not established any international standard for the two concerned substances and they were not included in the Codex General Standard for Food Additives, the Administration did not plan to regulate them at that stage. However, the Administration would continue to collect and analyse

scientific research reports and consider regulating these substances where necessary.

### **Relevant papers**

8. A list of the relevant papers available on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
8 June 2011

**Relevant papers on restriction of prohibited substances in milk**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Legislative Council	4.3.2009	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings (Pages 70 - 73)</a>

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