



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr Jove Chan)

Dear Mr Chan,

**List of follow-up actions arising from the discussion at the
special meeting on 21 January 2013**

At the special panel meeting held on 21 January 2013, the Administration was requested to provide a written response on the co-operation with relevant Mainland authorities regarding the use of pesticides and the control of pesticide residues in food. The Administration's response is set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Government is committed to enhancing food safety through a multi-pronged approach. It adopts the "from farm to table" strategy to safeguard public health by ensuring that food consumed by the public meets safety standards. This includes not only surveillance at the import, wholesale and retail levels, but also proper control at source. As the Mainland is a major supplier of food to Hong Kong, we have maintained close liaison with the State General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine and the respective entry-exit inspection and quarantine bureaux. We also conduct inspections of registered farms for exportation to Hong Kong on the Mainland regularly to ensure that livestock and agricultural products supplied to Hong Kong are wholesome and safe at source. From 2010 to 2012, a total of 91, 90 and 88 Mainland farms (including vegetable farms and orchards) were inspected respectively. Registered farms in the Mainland operate in accordance with the regulations and policies of the relevant Mainland authorities. Pesticides used must be those which are registered by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Under the current administrative arrangement between Hong Kong and the Mainland authorities, all vegetables supplied to Hong Kong must be accompanied by identification tags and export certificates. Samples of vegetables are taken from lorries for testing of pesticide residues at the Man Kam To Food Control Office (MKFCO). In 2012, a total of about 28 890 vegetable vehicles were inspected at MKFCO, and there was no report of cases involving vegetable source not tallying with accompanying documents. During the same period, over 18 200 vegetable samples collected at import, wholesale and retail levels were tested for pesticide residues and the satisfaction rate is 99.9%. Apart from maintaining close liaison with the Mainland in respect of management at source, the Government also conducts regular surveillance by collecting vegetable samples at import, wholesale and retail levels to ensure that the vegetables are safe for human consumption.

To facilitate effective regulatory control of pesticide residues in food and better protect public health, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (DFEH), in exercise of the power under section 55(1) of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), made the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (the Regulation) in June 2012. It has been specified in the Schedule of the Regulation a list of maximum residue limits (MRLs)/extraneous maximum residue limits (EMRLs), i.e. the maximum concentration of specified pesticide residues permitted in specified food commodities. The MRLs/EMRLs in the Schedule are based primarily on the available standards recommended by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex)¹, supplemented by related standards of the Mainland and other major food exporting countries to Hong Kong, and taking into consideration the views received during the public consultation period. In setting the above standards, the Government has further scrutinised these standards by conducting risk assessment based on local food consumption patterns to ensure that they are adequate to protect public health in Hong Kong. To allow sufficient time for the trade and farmers to comply with the Regulation, there is a transitional period of about two years prior to the commencement of the Regulation. To prepare for the commencement of the Regulation on 1 August 2014, the Centre for Food Safety has provided briefings, training and guidelines for different sectors of the trade.

¹ Codex was established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Health Organisation of the United Nations in 1960s and has been the single most important international reference point for consumers, food producers, processors, national food control agencies and the international food trade in developing food associated standards.

In addition, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Vegetable Marketing Organisation (VMO) have jointly run the Accredited Farm Scheme, which covers both local vegetable farms and those in the Mainland operated by Hong Kong farmers, since 1994. The Scheme aims at promoting the adoption of good horticultural practice and environmental friendly production. Integrated pest management and proper use of pesticides are emphasised with a view to ensuring production of quality vegetables that are safe for consumption. The Scheme thus safeguards the public health and benefits the farming community. The Accredited Farms under the Scheme have to follow the guidelines in the Accredited Farmer's Handbook and other regulations of the Scheme and allow inspections of their farms by AFCD. The operation of the Accredited Farms is closely monitored with samples of vegetables, soil, irrigation water and pesticides taken for analysis of pesticide/heavy metal residues. New cultivation techniques and other technical support are also provided to Accredited Farms. Accredited vegetables should be marketed through VMO. VMO will sample the vegetables for pesticide residue analysis before they are sold in the accredited retailers assigned by VMO. When the production does not meet the required standard, the Accredited Farms concerned would be prohibited from marketing their vegetables through VMO. AFCD will also suspend or lift the accredited status of the Accredited Farms which do not observe the Scheme's requirements.

Yours sincerely,



(Hinny Lam)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
(Attn.: Dr KK Liu)

Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
(Attn.: Dr SY Lee)

Government Chemist
(Attn.: Dr WO Lee)