

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the special meeting on 4 February 2013**

**Measures to stabilize supply of formula products for
infants and young children**

In the light of the increasing public concern over the supply of infant formula in Hong Kong, the Administration announced on 1 February 2013 a basket of measures to stabilize supply of formula milk in Hong Kong. The relevant press releases issued by the Administration are in **Appendix I**.

2. Four questions in relation to the supply of formula milk were raised at the Council meetings of 9 June 2010, and 16 February, 6 April and 4 May 2011 respectively. The questions and the Administration's replies are in **Appendices II to V** respectively.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 February 2013

新聞公報 2013年1月23日

食物及衛生局局長談嬰兒奶粉供應

以下是食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（一月二十三日）在立法會綜合大樓會見新聞界的談話內容：

食物及衛生局局長：香港政府一向積極推動母乳育嬰，不過我們明白有部分母親由於種種原因，仍然需要以嬰兒配方奶粉哺育她們的嬰兒。就奶粉供應方面，我們一直與供應商及零售商保持緊密聯絡，確保奶粉供應足夠。最近有報道指出，有些地方嬰兒奶粉供應緊張，我們非常關注此事宜。為此，食物及衛生局代表今日與所有主要嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應商，以及零售商組織代表開會。會上所有代表均同意，大家要努力確保香港的母親有足夠的嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應，主要奶粉供應商也表示近期供應是足夠的。此外，各主要供應商亦有免費的會員及熱線服務，甚至有送貨服務，向（香港）母親免費提供。我們希望透過此安排能確保供應。至於零售商方面，特別是大型連鎖零售商，也會堅持執行我們的共識，就是每人限購四罐。若供應商在一方面確保供應足夠，而零售商亦能緊守共識，每位顧客每次只限購四罐，應可確保嬰幼兒配方奶粉的供應足夠。我們亦會繼續監察市面上的情況，以及保持與供應商及零售商緊密聯絡，確保繼續有充足供應。

記者：（有關除了與供應商協調供應量或限購，有沒有其他方法以確保供應？）

食物及衛生局局長：我在此特別向所有零售商作出呼籲，在供應商能確保供應充足的大前提下，所有零售商，包括藥房及其他連鎖零售商請恪守我們現時的共識。若大家也能恪守此共識，我相信應該可以維持供應。我再說一次，政府會緊密監察事態發展，確保市面上有足夠的奶粉供應。

（請同時參閱談話內容的英文部分。）

完

2013年1月23日（星期三）
香港時間21時25分

食物及衛生局局長談本地嬰兒奶粉供應（附圖）

以下是食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（一月二十五日）在添馬政府總部西翼大堂，就本地嬰兒奶粉供應事宜會見新聞界的談話內容：

食物及衛生局局長：我們非常關注香港嬰幼兒配方奶粉（供應的問題），最近有傳媒報道有些地區出現奶粉短缺的問題。剛才政府代表，包括我和保安局局長黎棟國、海關代表，以及消費者委員會（消委會）的代表，包括黃鳳嫻總幹事及其同事，與主要的嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應商舉行了第二次會議。食物及衛生局的代表在前日（一月二十三日）已與有關業界舉行了第一次會議，因為傳媒一直就相關事宜作跟進報道，故今天再召開一次會議。在這事宜上，我們最重要的大原則是要確保香港的母親及其嬰兒有足夠的嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應，這是我們的大前提。在剛才的會議上，保安局同事，尤其是黎棟國局長，他們在資訊提供方面作出很大的幫助，他們提供了有關現時市面上哪些嬰幼兒配方奶粉牌子，是被針對地出現搶購的情況，對主要供應商而言，這是很重要的信息，讓大家可以溝通，在供應方面做得更好。在會議上，所有主要供應商也一再向我們保證及承諾，確保香港嬰幼兒配方奶粉的供應是他們一項很重要的工作，他們亦會透過各種安排，確保由現時開始至農曆新年這段高峰期，有足夠嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應香港市場。在這事宜上，我特別提醒供應商除了注意本地的需求外，亦有季節性的波動，還有跨境人士在香港零售點購買嬰幼兒配方奶粉。在考慮眾多需求上的因素後，供應商仍表示可確保供應充足。大家亦留意到有部分供應商已採取不同的措施，以提高市民對供應充足的信心，包括讓傳媒參觀他們的存貨情況等。他們亦有後備安排，在短時間內若有需要，能向香港市場補充供應。

第二方面，零售層面的供應鏈亦非常重要，因為現時出現的問題主要在零售層面，部分地區有較多人士，包括本地及跨境人士購買奶粉，因而造成局部地區有短時間出現缺貨的情況。在供應鏈方面，供應商已進行了很多工作，以確保在補貨方面，就嬰幼兒配方奶粉補充貨源，與零售層面做得更好，甚至有供應商承諾若零售商出現缺貨的情況，與他們聯絡後，可在二十四小時內補充供應。更重要的是，我希望有一個安全網存在，以確保本地的需求。若香港的母親及其家人到藥房或零售點購買奶粉時遇到困難，亦有安全網讓他們可得到供應。在這事宜上，所有供應商也設立熱線，有部分供應商更有網上購買的安排。在熱線及網上購買安排方面，甚至有一間供應商指定很大數目的零售點，若本地母親到這些零售點便一定能購買到奶粉，這安排十分重要。當然，我有留意這一、兩天有傳媒報道指致電部分熱線不容易接通，在這方面，我亦敦促了供應商增加人手，以加強熱線的運作。因此，最近有部分供應商已安排了網上購買渠道，在供應商確保加強熱線運作，加上網上購買奶粉的安排後，我相信應可作為安全網，若本地母親在前往一、兩個地方後也未能成功購買奶粉，亦有機制讓她們得到供應。

我提出的第三個問題是，有傳媒報道指有部分零售商的做法，令大家認為是較短視或不太恰當，這些做法會在整體上影響零售層面的供應，因而影響整體社會對香港嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應的信心。雖然所有供應商也能

確保供應充足，但若在零售層面有個別零售商使用一些方法，甚至配合水貨購物，的確會造成局部地區缺貨，因而影響整體消費者的信心，我認為這是非常不理想。因此，所有零售商均歡迎市民或消費者，若發現有如傳媒所報道不理想的情況出現，可向供應商投訴。當然，消委會亦設有投訴熱線，當消委會接到投訴後，會視乎個案的情況，首先通知政府，然後通知有關的供應商。若這些做法真的涉及違法的情況，政府有關部門會採取執法行動；就算不涉及違法情況，而是涉及不良的經營手法，供應商亦已承諾會跟進事宜及採取適當行動，包括警告。若情況嚴重，不排除限制，甚至終止供應。我希望這是較清晰的信息，我亦再呼籲零售商不要因為考慮短期的利益而影響香港嬰幼兒配方奶粉的整體供應，以及消費者的信心。稍後我們會向大家提供各供應商的熱線及網址的資料，消委會亦會提醒市民其投訴的機制及熱線。我們下一步會緊密監察市面上的情況，若有需要，我們會考慮採用其他方法，但我希望以上採用的方法可以穩定香港嬰幼兒配方奶粉的市場供應。

記者：剛才提及的都是穩定供應，但現在「水貨客」有多少奶粉，便搶購多少奶粉，有否考慮限制「水貨客」或跨境人士購買奶粉數量？

食物及衛生局局長：我們分析情況後，認為最重要是確保供應。正如我剛才所說，我們主要奶粉供應商承諾確保香港有足夠供應時，已考慮了香港本地的需要、季節性的波動，以及這數星期一些跨境人士的購買情況，這是最重要的信息。現時所謂搶購的情況，已造成局部在零售層面的機制失敗。因此，供應商已做了很多工作，首先確保零售層面的補貨機制，並再鞏固安全網，即已有熱線服務，如不足夠，便加上網站，如太多人致電熱線，導致不容易接通，一些供應商會增聘人手，確保熱線能接通；亦有供應商有指定零售點，並已在報紙刊登，只需在那裏登記，供應商很快便能補充貨物，我認為這是最重要的。就處理零售層面不正當做法方面，我剛才已說過，供應商會採取必要措施，包括警告、限制，甚至終止供應。我認為這些措施加起來，應有助穩定市場。當然不同人會建議不同措施，我們全部都知道，全部亦在考慮中，但我認為某些措施越嚴厲，可能會引致其他反效果。因此，暫時我們採取的措施是這些。我亦說過，我們會密切監察情況，然後再考慮是否需要採取其他措施。

記者：（有關本港會否考慮仿效澳門的做法，由政府統籌向嬰兒家長發出奶粉卡）

食物及衛生局局長：我亦留意到澳門政府有另一些做法，涉及政府自己作協調，我們也曾就這方面與供應商討論，我們在會議上作出的共識是兩地的情況不一樣，兩地的市場情況、人口多寡、地方大小都不同，在現階段我們的共識是認為現時設計的做法比較適合香港的情況。

記者：現時無論大型連鎖店或藥房都有參與出售奶粉予「水貨客」，這是供應商賺錢的渠道，他們怎會向該些店鋪終止供應（奶粉）？另外，家長亦關注價格，直接向供應商購買（的價錢）比在藥房購買的為高，政府就此有何對策？

食物及衛生局局長：第一，供應商的角色很重要，在香港來說，政府的角色是協調供應商。我們考慮每一件事情時，都需要平衡政府應干預多少，在此事件上，我認為現階段政府所做的協調工作，大家在會議上的共識也認為是適當的。供應商的角色非常重要，供應商自己亦同意，他們不單協

2013年1月25日(續)

調供應，並要確保供應商的供貨機制，直至零售層面亦是運作順暢。在這事上我很有信心，供應商每日均有與零售商，包括大型連鎖零售商，又或是小型供應商、零售點保持直接聯絡。因此，他們的協調機制，以及一些制裁措施，我認為都是很重要的。我們希望（這些做法）可幫助香港在短期內穩定供應情況。至於價錢問題，剛才黃總幹事已提及，政府暫時不會過分干預市場上的價格，但作為消費者委員會，我很高興看見他們在這方面代表消費者發言，敦促主要供應商發揮其作用，穩定本地市場的價格。

記者：剛才提到警告及終止供應等措施，都是依賴市民投訴，供應商才會處理。政府會否採取更主動的措施？

食物及衛生局局長：我們不單是依賴（市民）投訴，實際上政府不同部門（都有巡查），據我所知消費者委員會亦有同事定期在市場上作所需的巡查，我們會特別留意在零售層面的做法，這方面亦是我們消息的來源。正如我剛才所說，保安局黎棟國局長剛開會時便已提供了很有用的資料，現時市場上哪些品牌的嬰兒配方奶粉有很多人在搶購。透過各部門在市面上的巡查，我們會留意（零售層面的情況）。

（請同時參閱談話內容的英文部分。）

完

2013年1月25日（星期五）
香港時間22時59分

食物及衛生局局長談本地嬰兒配方奶粉供應

以下為食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（一月二十六日）上午出席電台節目後會見新聞界的談話內容：

記者：澳門政府昨日也推出措施，會為當地嬰兒登記發卡，確保每人每月最多可購五罐嬰兒配方奶粉。為何香港不可採用類似的方法？有何技術上困難？

食物及衛生局局長：我們也知悉，澳門當局因應當地的情況，（在保障本地父母獲得充足嬰兒配方奶粉供應方面）亦採取了一些措施，其實性質是一樣的，不過具體細節並不相同。我們昨天舉行會議時，亦有討論這事宜。各與會人士，無論是奶粉供應商或政府代表，大家的共識是認為，在香港來說，最重要的大前提是嬰兒配方奶粉有充足供應。大家也看到，部分奶粉供應商以不同方式向市民表明供應充足，而在有需要時，在補充供貨方面並無問題。我認為這是最重要的，因為於零售層面出現的部分問題，不單令本地媽媽（在購買奶粉時）感到辛苦，亦造成信心問題。因此，確保整體供應充足，恢復大家信心，這是十分重要的。接着是解決零售層面供應鏈的問題。在零售層面，一些中小型零售商不能儲存大量存貨，當他們面對（某類貨品）被搶購，在那些零售店出現暫時缺貨，這情況是會發生的。因此我們需要設立一個安全網，即由奶粉供應商提供的熱線服務。香港市場規模這麼龐大，我們認為由供應商直接提供熱線服務，比政府作為中介再去進行這工作更好，所以我們暫時的共識是採用這方法。我希望在這方法以外，再加上第三個方法，就是引進制裁措施，以確保零售層面供應鏈的秩序能慢慢恢復。我認為以上從三個層次處理的做法，在現階段而言能穩定香港的市場。我再重申，我們並非沒有考慮其他做法，不過每種做法也可能有其好處及害處，每個地方須視乎特別是其市場的大小，採取適合自己的措施。

記者：政府與奶粉供應商舉行了兩次會議，現時採取的做法也是從奶粉供應商入手，政府的介入較少，在執法方面可能要有違法行為，政府才會介入。其實你構思中的升級措施當中，是否稍後政府便會出手？

食物及衛生局局長：首先，我並不十分同意指政府的介入較少，在短短數天內，政府已與業界舉行了兩次會議，而且這做法的層次也是較高的。在第二次會議上提出保證供應的事宜，其實是十分具體的。我也十分感謝供應商，他們能配合我們的做法，在不同層次和途徑包括傳媒，將這保證（供應充足）的信息向市民發放。在第二個層次即供應鏈方面，正是問題所在之處，我們用了很多時間來討論如何能在零售層面供應鏈恢復秩序。我認為這是正視問題源頭其中一個重要方法。至於會否有其他更嚴厲的措施，我們肯定會考慮，但希望大家能理解，越嚴厲的措施，其負面效果可能越大，我們亦要更小心考慮才能推出。再者，若我們在未成熟階段已向外界發放這些消息，在某程度亦會影響我們的構思和將來的執行情況。

記者：你提到要靠奶粉供應商設立電話熱線供市民訂購奶粉，但很多本地媽媽指價格太高，會否引入機制去穩定奶粉價格？你又指若要求市民帶嬰

2013年1月26日(續)

兒出世紙去購買奶粉會擾民，但很多本地媽媽說並不覺得擾民，因為她們現在根本買不到奶粉，她們不介意有這要求，你會否考慮？

食物及衛生局局長：首先，現時香港的（嬰兒配方奶粉）是否有整體短缺，真的買不到呢？我剛才已解釋，在香港的（嬰兒配方奶粉）整體供應方面，我們已不只一次，以不同途徑和方法向大家保證，有關供應是充足的。我認為這很重要，在信心層面方面。是否必須推出一項如你剛才提及的方法呢？其實我現時在媒體上已看到有不同意見。當然，我尊重部分人士的意見，認為這是一個確保供應的方法。各方面提出來的意見我們也會考慮，但在未成熟前，而現階段我們的共識也是認為我剛才提出從三個層次（處理事件）的做法，能針對性恢復零售層面供應鏈的秩序，這應該是一個正確的做法。我亦說過不排除考慮其他方法，但一旦考慮更嚴厲的措施時，肯定會有更多不同的意見，以及更多其他負面考慮需要知道。

記者：在哪些情況下才認為有需要推出更嚴厲措施？

食物及衛生局局長：我們會緊密監察，加強巡查市面情況，並密切注意媒體所報道反映在市場上發生的事情。消費者委員會和奶粉供應商亦會開放其投訴熱線，讓我們能掌握更多資訊，以決定下一步怎樣做。

（請同時參閱談話內容的英文部分。）

完

2013年1月26日（星期六）

香港時間13時38分

食物及衛生局局長談本地嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應（只有中文）

以下是食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（一月二十七日）出席公開活動後會見新聞界的談話內容：

記者：昨日曾提及未必會考慮採取一些更嚴厲的措施，但有很多區的家長、市民稱，政府表示奶粉供應足夠，好像是欺騙他們，因他們很多時都未能購得奶粉。即使奶粉商供應一百萬罐（嬰幼兒配方奶粉），可能有二百萬人搶購。政府有否中期措施（應對）？

食物及衛生局局長：昨日我已清楚表示，很難確保每一個零售點在任何時候都一定有供應，這點我是承認的。我們所說的是，整體的（嬰幼兒配方奶粉）供應是足夠的，奶粉商亦三番四次確保整體供應足夠，如不足夠，亦可以很快作補充。的確，個別零售點不能存貨太多，如有人搶購，（奶粉）在短時間內被搶購一空，我承認這是會出現的情況。我們的（嬰幼兒奶粉）供應商已確保盡快供貨及補貨，有效率。我相信隨後數天，我們會緊密監察市面情況，以及關心本地媽媽購買（嬰幼兒）配方奶粉有沒有困難。我不排除（採取）嚴厲措施，我從來沒有排除採取更嚴厲的措施，只是採取的措施越嚴厲，一定會出現反面效果，我們需作平衡。我只是說現時暫不會討論更嚴厲的措施。我亦留意到有評論指，如兩地存在價格上長期的差距，又或是其他方面供求因素不平衡，長遠來說，仍然需要再想辦法。我承認就這問題，長遠來說，要尋找另外一些方法（應對）。短期來說，希望大家明白，我相信供應商有決心保持香港的供貨充足。我們並集中精力在第二層，即希望能恢復零售供應鏈方面的秩序。我們這數天會密切監察市面上的情況，不排除有其他更進一步行動。希望大家明白，我不會在此討論我們正在考慮而未成熟，又或是未決定要採取的行動。我知道有一部分市民可能會採取表態的行動。我們表達意見，香港是自由社會，是完全可以的，我只希望不要出現混亂的情況，以及大家要注意人身安全，在和平的氣氛下表達意見，我是理解的。實際上的確有很多（事情），包括奶粉供應這事件，引起香港市民對兩地之間較敏感及不同的考慮，我是完全明白的，亦沒有辦法令大家不要思考相關問題。我們所能做到的，是確保整體供應，並在第二層，恢復零售供應鏈方面的秩序。信心是十分重要的，如我們擔心整體供應，便會加劇搶購行動，進一步破壞零售（層面方面）的秩序，我只能說到這裏。

記者：你是否認為現時的民怨，如再不採取行政措施，會到爆發點？

食物及衛生局局長：我希望大家明白，並透過大家讓市民知道整體（嬰幼兒配方奶粉）供應是足夠的。雖然我承認，兩地不單是指配方奶粉事件，其他地方如存在物價上的差距，又或是另外一些因素，長期來說，需尋求另外一些方法去解決。

記者：例如甚麼方法？

食物及衛生局局長：我已說過，我們正在考慮的方法，並不適合、亦不會現在便提早在此討論，但我們不排除採取其他行動。

2013年1月27日(續)

記者：有否指標達至甚麼（程度），才會採取更嚴厲措施？因市民現在已認為情況嚴重。

食物及衛生局局長：我們正密切監察市面上情況，即使是我本人今日出席另外一些活動，之前和之後亦到過所謂搶購熱點視察。當然如我以官方身分去視察並不是太理想，我會想想辦法。我們的同事，不論是食環署，又或是民政事務處的同事亦有到地區視察，消委會亦配合我們的工作。我們並已敦促供應商派員監察市面的情況。多謝大家。

完

2013年1月27日（星期日）

香港時間17時45分

食物及衛生局局長談本地嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應

以下是食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（一月三十日）出席電台節目後會見新聞界的談話內容：

記者：在集體供貨安排方面，會否如澳門的層次，但不是以排隊方式收集母親的資料，而是以現有收集資料的渠道來推行集體供應？具體安排為何？

食物及衛生局局長：我剛才在電台的直播節目中，有機會與多位本地母親通電話。這是其中一個途徑（監察情況），但其實不同部門的同事在過去一星期，也監察市面不同零售點的情況，加上剛才聆聽到很多本港母親反映，其實情況十分不理想，我對此亦感到很不開心。水貨客繼續搶購奶粉，我亦曾表示，香港雖然有很多零售點，但個別零售點的存貨量肯定不多。在這情況下，有包括水貨客的人士搶購奶粉，個別零售點肯定不能全部時間也能維持有貨。另一方面，我感到不開心的是我們觀察到，亦聽到反映，指一些零售點的經營者繼續以不規範的方法，包括抬價和配合水貨客以供貨給他們，這些情況加劇了本地母親及嬰兒在嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應（方面的問題）。我們已不斷與主要的奶粉供應商及零售商開會，至今已舉行了四、五次會議。他們仍能維持整體供應足夠，而部分供應商已開始對零售商的不規範行為作出制裁，包括警告及限量供貨，我希望在這方面繼續提升制裁力度。此外，在集體供應的層面，據剛才我與本港母親傾談所知，一些供應商的熱線服務，由於很多時候有太多人同時致電，故不能確保能發揮其功能。

整體而言，我們認為在香港市場規模如此龐大的情況下，同時又面對水貨客嚴峻的挑戰，一定要多管齊下。在食物及衛生局方面，我們在聆聽各方面的意見後，已開始與供應商討論如何完善集體供貨的方法。較早時有傳媒提問有關澳門所採取的方法，經分析後，其實是把供應的問題提升至集體供應的層面，這是可取的，但唯一問題是香港的市場規模較大，我不希望看到很多人排隊進行這事宜，我們需要考慮另外的方法，以完善供應商現有的集體供應機制。部分母親也確認，若此機制能發揮其作用，應可解決問題，保障本地母親及嬰兒獲得嬰幼兒配方奶粉的供應。在食物及衛生局而言，我們會加強與供應商及零售商的溝通，繼續確保整體嬰幼兒配方奶粉的供應足夠，並完善集體供應的機制，亦要加強對做出不規範行為的零售商的制裁措施。整體而言，特區政府肯定要多管齊下，包括考慮如何打擊水貨活動，才可在嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應方面恢復秩序。

記者：在集體供應方面，澳門的做法是派奶粉卡，以取得母親及嬰兒的資料，但哪個香港現有機制會存有所有本地母親及嬰兒的資料？派發地點會設在哪裏？

食物及衛生局局長：首先，我相信就算要完善集體供應的機制，也不可以忽略現有供應商的熱線機制。因此，完善機制應是一個基礎的考慮，問題是在此基礎上，我們有何方法介入，以確保機制能完全發揮作用。我較早時說過，我們正醞釀及討論一些方法，希望在兩、三天內可解決，不是很

2013年1月30日(續)

長時間，因此在現階段，並未成熟至可向大家詳細描述，希望大家理解。

記者：打擊不規範的行為，除了依賴供應商的供貨及警告外，政府有何角色？

食物及衛生局局長：政府在不同的法例範疇內均有方法制裁，但必定要基於事實及個別的情節。因此，我們現時考慮的機制，例如在傳媒報道中收集資料、各部門同事巡查後取得的資料，以及各投訴渠道，包括消費者委員會的投訴機制，我們一定要分析收集到的資料，包括每個個案的情節，究竟涉及違法行為，還是並未至於違法，但屬不規範的行為。若屬不規範的行為，相信大家也理解，我們不可用執法的方式處理，而是要採用供應商的制裁。因為這是經濟行為，只要能加強力度，相信供應商的制裁不是沒有作用。若我們把問題提升至集體供應的層面，壞處是零售商方面會受影響，但好處是若這機制可確保供應，這是最重要的。在確保供應之餘，若零售商明白這道理，希望有助加快恢復（嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應市場的）秩序。

記者：有關集體供應，零售點的存貨可能不多，若有母親取貨，是前往供應商的貨倉，因為貨倉有幾十萬罐奶粉，還是在政府的母嬰健康院派發？

食物及衛生局局長：有人曾提出在政府的服務點派發（奶粉），但我相信有很多地點，例如母嬰健康院的空間有限，若有大量人往來，亦要預備地方存貨及供應奶粉等，未必可行。實際上，在集體供應的層面，較大型的零售點完全可做到，就是若已預訂嬰幼兒配方奶粉，可保留給已預訂的本地母親取貨，相信這可做到。

（請同時參考談話內容的英文部分。）

完

2013年1月30日（星期三）
香港時間14時21分

Press Releases 1 February 2013

Joint statement on recommendations to parents on formula milk feeding of young children by DH and five health-care professional bodies

Following is a joint statement on recommendations to parents on formula milk feeding of young children issued by the Department of Health (DH), the Department of Paediatrics of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine of the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians, the Hong Kong Paediatric Society and the Hong Kong Medical Association today (February 1):

The DH and the above-mentioned health-care professional bodies attach great importance to the recent concern about the shortage of supply of formula milk in Hong Kong widely reported in the media.

The DH has all along been promoting and educating parents about the healthy feeding of infants and young children. In view of the current situation, the DH together with these five professional bodies from the medical sector would like to take this opportunity to reinforce the recommendations on formula milk feeding for parents, from children's nutrition and health perspectives, to ease their worries about not being able to continue feeding their babies with a particular brand of formula milk.

The recommendations are as follows:

For children under 1 year old

(a) For newborn to 6-month-old babies

Milk is the sole source of nutrients for newborn to 6-month-old babies. Infant formulae are very similar in composition as required by the Codex Standards for Infant Formula and parents should choose Infant Formula (No. 1 Formula) which meets the Codex Standards. If parents have difficulty in securing the brand currently consumed by their babies, they can consider switching to another brand.

(b) For 6- to 12-month-old babies

Babies within this age range have started taking complementary food, and they may either take Infant Formula (No. 1 Formula) or switch to Follow-up Formula (No. 2 Formula) of any brand, although there is currently inadequate scientific or medical evidence to suggest the use of Follow-up Formula (No. 2 Formula) marketed for these children.

(c) In general, babies can directly change to another brand of formula milk and the pace depends on individual acceptance.

(d) Use boiled water of no less than 70 degrees Celsius to make formula milk as this kills harmful bacteria.

(e) Cow milk is not suitable for babies under 1 year old.

Children aged 1 year old or above

(a) At this age, eating a varied diet can meet children's nutritional requirements. Parents should note that milk is only part of a balanced diet and a convenient source of calcium for children aged 1 year old or above. A daily intake of 360 to 480 millilitres of milk largely satisfies the calcium requirements of young children.

(b) Parents can let their children drink cow milk (including fresh cow milk, UHT milk or full fat milk powder), which is less expensive than formula milk. There is no nutritional reason to switch to Follow-up Formula (No. 3 or 4 Formula) marketed for these children.

(c) For the choice of cow milk, children under 2 years old should take whole milk, those aged between 2 and 5 can take low-fat milk and children above 5 years old can take skimmed milk.

(d) Parents can also give their children other calcium-rich foods, such as tofu, green leafy vegetables, yoghurt and cheese, to meet their calcium needs.

As for expectant mothers, breast milk is the best natural food for their babies and due consideration should be given to exclusively breastfeeding their babies for the first six months, then with the introduction of complementary foods, and continuing breastfeeding up to 2 years old and beyond.

For more information and recommendations on formula milk for young children, members of the public can visit the website of the Family Health Service of the DH (www.fhs.gov.hk/eindex.html).

Ends/Friday, February 1, 2013
Issued at HKT 17:10

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Press Releases 1 February 2013

Multi-pronged approach to ensure stable supply of infant milk formula (with video)

The Secretary for Security, Mr Lai Tung-kwok; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung; and the Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Ko Wing-man, today (February 1) chaired a joint press conference together with relevant bureaux and departments to announce various measures for combating cross-boundary parallel trading activities. A multi-pronged approach has been adopted to ensure stable supply of infant milk formula.

To enhance co-operation and law enforcement operations, the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department and Shenzhen Customs, starting from today have further strengthened enforcement efforts against parallel traders. A joint anti-smuggling operation against daily commodities was launched, in particular targeting parallel trading of infant milk formula. The actions include:

- * Monitoring parallel trading activities at boundary control points. Shenzhen customs officers will be notified of on-site activities involving infant milk formula. Shenzhen Customs will carry out enforcement action.
- * Enhancing intelligence exchange and carrying out joint investigations. By targeting the sources of supply, distribution, transportation and storage and distribution of products on the Mainland, etc, the supply chain of the infant milk formula parallel trade will be interrupted.
- * Enhancing checks on travellers at boundary control points. With immediate effect, Shenzhen Customs will strengthen inspections of daily commodities, especially infant milk formula. Inspections will be conducted at all boundary control points on all passengers who are, or are suspected to be, carrying infant milk formula.
- * Implementing a passenger arrival monitoring system. Shenzhen Customs has implemented an information management system to keep track of passengers' arrival records on a single day and within a short period of time so as to support Shenzhen Customs' strict control on passengers bringing in self-used commodities, especially infant milk formula.

On immigration control, the Immigration Department has developed a "watch list of suspected parallel traders" gathered through different sources, including information on persons arrested or convicted, intelligence and analysis of immigration data, etc. Those on the watch list will be refused entry and removed to the Mainland if their purpose of visit is in doubt.

Due to the problem of a supply chain failure in the market, the Government has decided to set up the following special hotline service as a short-term measure to ensure that parents of local infants and young children are able to secure the purchase of infant milk formula:

- * Apart from the existing hotline services provided by infant milk formula suppliers, a 24-hour special hotline at 3142 2288

has been set up by the Government with effect from today. The hotline came into operation at 6pm today and is operated by staff of the Efficiency Unit.

* Local parents of infants and young children under 3 years of age who are unable to purchase the seven major brands of infant milk formula (Abbott, Cow & Gate, Mead Johnson, Friso, Nestlé, Wyeth and Snow Brand) at the retail level or through the suppliers' hotlines may dial up this hotline for referrals of purchase orders to the relevant suppliers.

* The seven major infant milk formula suppliers have pledged that, to address the concern of parents, deliveries will be made before the Chinese New Year for all the purchase orders placed today, tomorrow and on Sunday (February 1 to 3) via the special hotline.

The Government spokesman said, "The special hotline set up by the Government serves as a safety net to provide assistance to local parents who are unable to obtain infant milk formula due to various reasons. Their order requests will be referred to relevant suppliers for meeting their babies' needs and easing their worries."

To combat the moves of "couriers" to transport large quantities of infant milk formula away from the supply chain in Hong Kong, the Government will introduce legislative amendments to control the export of infant milk formula out of Hong Kong. It is believed that such a move can effectively stabilise the infant milk formula supply to local consumers. The measures include the following:

* The Government will amend the Import and Export (General) Regulations (Cap. 60 A) to impose export control on infant milk formula except under and in accordance with an export licence issued by the relevant authority.

* The Government will consult the trade in the short term and formulate details with a view to submitting the proposed legislative amendments to the Executive Council in February for implementation as soon as possible.

* Having regard to the need of those departing from Hong Kong for infant milk formula for their own consumption, the preliminary proposal by the Government is that not more than a net weight of 1.8 kilograms of infant milk formula may be carried by each person, excluding children. Calculated on the basis of a net weight of 0.9kg for one can of infant milk formula, each person may carry two cans.

Meanwhile, the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL) will impose more weight limit restrictions on passenger luggage along the East Rail Line to tie in with the Government's further efforts in combating parallel trading activities. The new measures are as follows:

* Starting next Monday (February 4), the weight limit for passenger luggage will be further lowered from the existing 32kg to 23kg for the East Rail Line. The measure will be implemented on a trial basis for three months. The Government and the MTRCL share the view that restrictions on passenger luggage should be dealt with prudently. While more stringent controls can help reduce nuisance to passengers, they should not cause much inconvenience to general passengers.

* Starting next Monday, weight checks for passenger luggage will also be conducted at the Tai Po Market and Fo Tan stations. Currently, ground scales are installed at Sheung Shui, Fanling, Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau stations.

* Manpower of the By-laws Inspection Unit (BIU) will be further increased. The number of BIU members will be increased by half from the existing 39 to 59.

The spokesman said he hoped that the measures could effectively combat cross-boundary parallel trading of infant milk formula and ease local parents' worries about not being able to buy infant milk formula in the local market.

Ends/Friday, February 1, 2013
Issued at HKT 21:07

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食物及衛生局局長談嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應

以下是食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（二月二日）出席公開活動後會見新聞界的談話內容：

食物及衛生局局長：昨日政府公布了多管齊下（確保嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應）的措施，在公布相關措施後，我們聽到很多不同的意見，不過我相信，起碼大家似乎也理解我們為何要這樣做。公布了措施後，其實我們更緊張這段時間，因為第一關是政府的熱線是否能發揮功能，我們會緊密監察。由昨晚至現時為止，熱線已收到2 000多個電話，其中部分是致電查詢，有1 000多宗已轉介至奶粉供應商，稍後可向大家提供詳細數字。即使完成了這一步，我們亦需要擔心下一步，就是奶粉供應商是否能夠履行承諾。昨晚致電熱線的家長，其資料已在昨晚轉交至奶粉供應商，供應商需要一至兩天的時間回覆家長，核實其身份，再在三天內（取貨）。我們也在計算時間，理論上第一批家長應在本周四或周五獲得奶粉供應。若所有未能從其他途徑獲得嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應的家長，在這兩天致電熱線，起碼可在農曆新年前獲得供應。

記者：接聽熱線的職員會把資料轉介至奶粉供應商，這是否把責任轉介給奶粉供應商？

食物及衛生局局長：我們不要談甚麼責任，實際上奶粉的供應是依靠嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應商。當然，很多人也曾提出不同程度的方式希望政府介入，但一旦政府開始介入，大家便會有不同意見。現時介入的程度是針對性的，就是現在情況最弱的一環，是指那些需要嬰幼兒配方奶粉的母親，她們根本不能接觸奶粉供應商接受訂單的部分，若我們解決了這方面的問題，奶粉供應商其他物流的工作，例如如何分派奶粉，據我所知，他們是採取多種途徑，也會按照母親的意願，有些母親希望到指定的零售點取貨，有些希望安排送貨。因此，我們在首階段進行了這工作，再留意有關工作發揮的效用如何。

記者：（有關熱線的訂購服務）

食物及衛生局局長：據我所知，有些需要特別安排的也不是最缺乏貨源的地區，在（政府措施的）針對性而言，我們知道在市面缺貨的主要是兩個品牌，但我們希望整個安排可涵蓋（市場份額）超過百分之九十的奶粉，故一起安排（轉介服務）。若真的有這些（特別）要求的供應商，相信（該品牌）在市面上的供應並沒有出現太大問題。我希望大家了解我們採取這做法，但並不是只有這辦法，其他有關部門打擊水貨客活動的工作亦是十分重要。我很希望向前線的工作人員在這期間的工作表達謝意，因為不論是熱線，該熱線在很短的時間內成立，有部分職員需要取消休假。他們的效率是無庸置疑的，但需要取消休假也很辛苦，而且在短時間內他們的工作量會很大。我們預計，這類熱線在成立初期也會收到最多電話，當滿足了大部分的需要後，希望接到的電話數量可穩定。

記者：當局以甚麼指標認為市場供應鏈恢復正常，可取消這條熱線？

2013年2月2日(續)

食物及衛生局局長：有很多種。第一，會留意是否收到報告、消費者委員會是否接到投訴，當然有部分市民也會向傳媒反映，其中一種較量化的指標，但並非只依靠它，這就是熱線接到電話的數目，在情況穩定後，應會接到較少電話。另外，我想補充一句，除了接聽熱線的同事外，海關的前線職員及負責物流的同事也會很辛苦。

(請同時參考談話內容的英文部分。)

完

2013年2月2日(星期六)
香港時間17時17分

食物及衛生局局長談嬰幼兒配方奶粉供應及活牛供應

以下是食物及衛生局局長高永文今日（二月三日）出席電視節目後會見新聞界的談話內容：

記者：（有關政府設立的熱線運作情況，以及現時計劃每人最多只可帶兩罐奶粉離境，若有母親帶嬰兒到美加等地旅遊一個月，現階段又不考慮豁免，會怎樣處理這些個案？）

食物及衛生局局長：首先，該熱線開始運作至今約兩天，共收到超個3,800個電話，部分來電只是查詢，而需轉交給奶粉供應商跟進供應安排的超個2,000宗。我已說得很清楚，這是一項短期措施，希望此措施，再加上其他多管齊下的措施，一旦開始產生效用，我們會考慮取消熱線服務。但在取消這措施若干時間後，是否有需要（再重設熱線），則要視乎當時的環境。今次推出的措施分為長期和短期，長期措施包括持續打擊水貨客、加強在過境口岸兩地合作，持續限制水貨過境，以及建議修訂《進出口（一般）規例》（第60章，附屬法例A）。在眾多措施實施後，我們一定要以觀後效，觀察這些措施在長期而言，能否幫助香港起碼在嬰兒配方奶粉供應方面，可維持較長期的穩定性。

在限制出境奶粉數量方面，修訂《進出口（一般）規例》基本上是禁止出口，但在禁止出口的同時，其實已考慮個人自用的需要，即父母帶嬰兒離港時需要自用，因此才有建議每人限帶兩罐奶粉出境的措施。我們在這方面需要取平衡，無論容許攜帶多些或少些離境也有不同的正負面效果。若可攜帶多些，可能會影響打擊攜帶水貨出境的有效性；但只可攜帶很少，可能會造成一些困難。我們相信現時的建議是一個適當的平衡，其實（每人可帶兩罐離境）已是在法例下豁免的安排。

記者：會否考慮若海關人員看到小朋友，可容許攜帶多些奶粉離境？

食物及衛生局局長：我們初步的傾向不想這樣，主要是擔心小朋友會被捲入協助攜帶水貨的漩渦中，希望大家理解。

記者：很多內地人來港買奶粉也是自用，因為對香港產品有信心，未必是水貨客，會否覺得對這些內地遊客不公平？會否擔心影響香港作為購物天堂的地位？

食物及衛生局局長：我再強調，這一系列多管齊下的措施其實是迫不得已才會採取，事實上，在整體奶粉供應充足的情況下，因為水貨客搶購造成衝擊，而令我們零售供應鏈失效，若不採取這些措施，暫時來說較難處理這問題。香港的零售鏈以中小企為主，每個零售點的容量有限，受水貨客搶購貨品衝擊，很難每間零售商也保證貨品有源源不絕的供應。

記者：有報道指內地供港牛場數目由35間減至18間，有否了解事件？局方會如何應對？

2013年2月3日(續)

食物及衛生局局長：我也有留意這情況。一直以來，香港正討論供港活牛價格上升的原因，有些人指是因為壟斷問題；亦有很多資訊顯示，實際上內地的活牛供應本身也十分緊張，內地活牛的存欄量下降了超過百分之三十，再加上內地一些大城市的消費能力提高，因此內地本身也存在搶購活牛供應的問題。我較早時已說過，香港必須以較科學的態度看待此事，我們已邀請專家協助進行市場研究，現時仍在進行中。有關這方面的所有資訊及在香港發生的情況，我們一定會緊密監察。我對每天供港及屠宰的活牛數量也有所掌握，最近的活牛供應是相對穩定的，但每天的屠宰數量減少，原因可能是價格上升，但價格上升是因為壟斷，還是內地市場供應非常緊張，因而缺乏彈性，各方面我們均需要考慮。我只可以說，我們在這階段完全採取開放態度，但在作出政策決定時，希望大家了解，我們必須有客觀及較科學的證據支持。

(請同時參考談話內容的英文部分。)

完

2013年2月3日(星期日)
香港時間14時03分

Press Releases 6 June 2010

LCQ17: Supply of baby formula

Following is a question by the Hon Abraham Shek and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Dr York Chow, in the Legislative Council today (June 9):

Question:

It has been reported that there has been a rapid increase in the mainland customers' demand for baby formula in Hong Kong. Such demand resulted in a 10% to 20% shortage in the supply of baby formula in Hong Kong as estimated by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Pharmacy Limited. As such, some parents in Hong Kong have started stockpiling baby formula even though they already have weeks of stock. In this connection, will the Government inform the Council:

(a) of the monitoring measures and co-ordination mechanism currently adopted by the authorities to ensure a stable supply of baby formula in Hong Kong;

(b) given that under the short-term food assistance projects funded by the Social Welfare Department, non-governmental organisations which implement the projects provide short-term food assistance including baby formula for target service users, whether the Government has assessed the impact of the aforesaid shortage in the supply of baby formula in Hong Kong on the provision of baby formula to such service users; if an assessment has been made, of the details (including the number of service users affected and the assistance provided to them between 2008 and 2010);

(c) of the maximum quantity of baby formula allowed for travellers in each export clearance for personal effects in Hong Kong at present; and

(d) whether it will consider imposing additional restriction on the quantity of baby formula to be exported from Hong Kong as personal effects; if it will, of the details of the implementation schedule; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

(a) The Government's policy on the supply of non-staple food is to ensure that the food market and food trade are highly open and competitive, with diversified sources and food types, with a view to maintaining a stable food supply.

Food products (including baby formula) from around the world can be imported into Hong Kong for distribution according to market demand as long as they comply with the statutory requirements in Hong Kong. Consumers can choose from a wide variety of food products at varying prices.

When the melamine incident happened in 2008, local parents flocked to buy baby formula. At that time, the Food and Health Bureau promptly liaised with major suppliers of baby formula and

encouraged them to increase the quantity of import, so as to ensure a stable supply. The Consumer Council also liaised with the trade on the incident, kept in view the prices of baby formula in the market and disseminated consumer information. The Government will continue to keep in view the supplies of major food products and maintain liaison with the trade.

On the other hand, the Government is committed to promoting, upholding and supporting breastfeeding. Breastfeeding provides optimal nutritional, immunological and emotional nurturing for the growth and development of infants - its benefits are unequalled. Workshops are provided by the Department of Health to educate pregnant women about the importance of early initiation of breastfeeding and exclusive breastfeeding. Counselling service is also provided to support breastfeeding mothers. In public hospitals, the Hospital Authority provides clinical instructions to pregnant women to help them acquire breastfeeding skills. In parallel, the Government makes available baby care rooms in government premises, as well as promotes and provides guidance for setting up baby care rooms in commercial premises.

(b) The Labour and Welfare Bureau indicates that according to the non-governmental organisations operating the short-term food assistance service projects, the supply of baby formula for the service has remained steady since the service began in February 2009 and is sufficient to meet the service demand. Up to the end of April 2010, about 5,000 cans of baby formula had been provided for 830 service users.

(c) and (d) Hong Kong embraces free market economy and free trade. To meet market demand, the trade always reacts swiftly and flexibly to changes in demand and supply of overseas and local markets. The demand and supply of food are also determined by the market. The Food and Health Bureau will not impose any control on export of food where there is no particular concern on grounds of public hygiene and prevention of diseases.

Ends/Wednesday, June 9, 2010

Issued at HKT 14:41

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Press Releases 16 February 2011

LCQ18: Milk powder supply

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Dr York Chow, in the Legislative Council today (February 16):

Question:

It has been reported that many travellers and "couriers" from the Mainland buy milk powder in Hong Kong, causing a short supply of as well as a speculative surge in the prices of milk powder locally, and the North District in the New Territories, which is adjacent to the border, is most affected in that some pharmacies sold out all their milk powder in less than 10 minutes after replenishment. Some parents have initiated a campaign on the Internet to urge the Government to levy a milk powder export tax as a means to combat the situation. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) given that the Secretary for Food and Health revealed on January 28 that the authorities had contacted the trade which supplied milk powder and it considered that there was sufficient supply on the market, of the details of the contact between both sides; whether the trade had provided any data or information to show that there was sufficient supply, and what concrete arrangements had been made to further increase the supply of milk powder on the market;

(b) whether it has assessed the shortage of milk powder at the retail level and whether there was stockpiling by retailers, if so, of the details, and the measures to be adopted to solve the problem; if not, whether it will consider conducting the aforesaid assessment;

(c) of the concrete measures to stabilise milk powder prices in Hong Kong and avoid speculative surge of prices;

(d) given that quite a number of travellers from the Mainland came to Hong Kong during the Chinese New Year, whether the Government has assessed if the problem of milk powder shortage has further been aggravated; and

(e) whether it will consider taking any measure, including studying the aforesaid proposal of the parents, to restrict bulk purchase of milk powder by any person; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government cares about babies' health and pays particular attention to the safety and supply of milk powder. Since the reports of possible shortage of infant formula, we have been proactively liaising closely with milk powder suppliers, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Pharmacy and major retailers. We were assured by the suppliers that they had sufficient stock, and that they would increase supply to cope

with the growing market demand. Our reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

(a) The Food and Health Bureau and the Consumer Council have been keeping close liaison with major milk powder suppliers, which have responded positively by increasing the supply of infant formula in the market. According to the trade, one of the major suppliers has been shipping in milk powder to Hong Kong by air since the last quarter, and its supply in February this year will be more than twice of that last year. Another major supplier has made continuous effort to increase the supply in the Hong Kong market over the past four years and its supply in 2010 was more than doubled when compared with that in 2006.

The major suppliers of milk powder have also set up free membership systems and they provide delivery service to Hong Kong customers. They also make use of different channels to enhance communication with Hong Kong parents (e.g. short messaging service). Their hotline service advises members of the retail outlets with stocks, and assists parents in placing orders for milk powder. Voice mail service was also provided during the Lunar New Year holidays.

Retailers have also been closely monitoring the sale situation, particularly those retail outlets in areas near the boundary and along the East Rail Line. They have actively approached the suppliers to discuss arrangements for increasing supply and delivery to expedite replenishment, so as to meet the demand of the market. Some retail outlets have set sale quota for certain brands of milk powder to cater for the demand of local citizens.

(b) According to our assessment and the information obtained from the trade, the overall supply of infant formula in the market is sufficient. The shortage in the supply of particular brands at some retail outlets was mainly due to the great demand at these retail outlets at certain times. It is basically an issue of demand and supply.

(c) We believe that the measures mentioned in our reply to part (a) will help stabilise the supply and price of milk powder. We will continue to keep the market condition in view.

(d) The suppliers and retailers of milk powder have actively taken steps to meet the market demand. During the Lunar New Year holidays, the supply of milk powder was stable without any report of serious shortage.

(e) Hong Kong has been pursuing a free trade policy and is well known for its simple tax system. In considering whether a duty should be imposed on the export of a certain product (e.g. milk powder), we must consider thoroughly various factors, such as whether it is in line with our free trade policy, the implications on our tax system, and whether the imposition of such tax is the most effective way to stabilise the local supply. Having taken into account various factors, we do not consider there is a need to impose a duty on milk powder when being taken outside Hong Kong.

Ends/Wednesday, February 16, 2011

Issued at HKT 13:01

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Press Releases 6 April 2011

LCQ15: Infant formula supply

Following is a question by the Hon Frederick Fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Dr York Chow, in the Legislative Council today (April 6):

Question:

It has been reported that the incident of radiation leak in Japan has sent consumers scrambling for infant formulas in Hong Kong recently, thus further tightening the supply. Some members of the public criticised that some shops had increased the price excessively, and some even bundled the sale of infant formulas with other goods. As revealed by the CHOICE magazine published by the Consumer Council (CC) in March 2011, of the 33 items of the major brands of infant formulas surveyed, 24 had had their average retail prices increased from 4% to 12% (comparing the prices for April 2009 to February 2010 with those for the same period from 2010 to 2011), registering an increase in price higher than the food price inflation rate (3.6%) for the corresponding period. The survey also shows that the out-of-stock rate of infant formulas of some popular brands was as high as 64%, and it is believed that the scrambling for these products by non-local people is one of the causes of the heightened out-of-stock rate. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether the authorities have looked into the reasons why the increase in retail prices of infant formulas is much higher than the food price inflation rate; and whether there is stockpiling and hoarding for speculation; given that CC has urged formula suppliers to consider setting up an industry code of practice to ensure adequate supply to local consumers, will the Government consider facilitating the trade in drawing up a code of practice, including ensuring adequate supply to local consumers and adopting the means of suspending supply to retail shops which raise the price of infant formulas unreasonably;

(b) given the recent situation of intense scrambling for infant formulas, of the authorities' concrete measures to ensure adequate supply and stabilise the prices of infant formulas, so as to avoid speculative surge of prices; and what measures are in place to ensure that the grassroots need not bear huge expenses on infant formulas; and

(c) whether the authorities will grasp this opportunity to promote the benefits of breastfeeding to the public and step up public education, so as to eliminate the misconception of the public that infant formulas are richer and more comprehensive in nutrient components than breastmilk, and to address parents' concern that switching to other brands of infant formulas may affect the health of their babies, so that they will consider choosing other brands with relatively stable supply, and to change the current situation of the blind worship of famous brands by parents; if they will, of the specific details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government cares about babies' health and has been promoting the merits of breastfeeding in order to encourage its adoption by parents. The Government also understands that some parents still prefer infant formula, and has therefore paid particular attention to their safety and supply. Since the reports of shortage of infant formula, we have been proactive in liaising closely with major infant formula suppliers, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Pharmacy and major retailers. We were assured by the suppliers that they had sufficient stock on hand, and that they would increase supply to cope with the growing market demand.

After the nuclear radiation leak triggered by earthquake and tsunami in Japan, we noted that the supply of certain brands of Japanese infant formula might be reduced as a result. Japanese brands accounted for about one-fourth of the supply in the local market in the past year, and shortage of some brands might have direct impact on those babies consuming these products. Meanwhile, suppliers of other infant formula brands have indicated that they had adequate stock to meet the demand if parents chose to switch to their brands. As the nuclear radiation leak may have a prolonged impact, the supply of Japanese infant formula to Hong Kong will inevitably be unstable. In these circumstances, the Government asks parents to consider switching to other brands of infant formula for their babies when necessary. As the ingredients of different brands of infant formula are generally the same, switching brands for babies should not pose problems provided that due care is exercised during the transition period.

The reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(a) and (b) Since the earthquake and the incident of nuclear radiation leak in Japan, we have been proactive in liaising closely with major suppliers, importers and retailers to keep in view the supply and market situation of Japanese infant formula, and to understand the impact of the earthquake and nuclear incident in Japan on the supply of infant formula in Hong Kong. At the meeting chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food) on March 22, 2011, major suppliers, importers and retailers of food and infant formula indicated that the supply of Japanese infant formula could not meet the recent surge in demand. Importers have already requested the suppliers in Japan to increase their exports. There were indeed uncertainties as to the quantity of supply in the near future since some Japanese manufacturers had advised the local trade that the exports to Hong Kong might be reduced in order to meet domestic need in Japan. Nonetheless, the trade will step up liaison with the Japanese suppliers with a view to minimising the impact on Hong Kong as far as possible.

As the public expected that the nuclear incident would have a prolonged impact on the supply of Japanese infant formula, many of them scrambled to purchase those products manufactured before the earthquake, generating a sudden upsurge of demand. Given the dynamics of supply and demand, prices at some retail outlets soared. This was due to a short-term imbalance in demand and supply and the suppliers' commercial considerations.

As regards infant formula imported from other countries, their supply will not be affected by the earthquake and nuclear incident in Japan since their raw materials come mainly from Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Representatives of the trade have also indicated that supply of these infant formulas was abundant. They are prepared to provide guidance to parents who wish to switch from Japanese brands to other brands. The major

brands have already set up hotlines or purchase and delivery services.

During their communication with the Government, the representatives of the major infant formula suppliers have all agreed that meeting the needs of local babies was their prime responsibility, and they had been closely monitoring the market situation. If necessary, arrangements would be made for increasing supply in Hong Kong to ensure a stable supply of infant formula in the local market.

Hong Kong practises free trade, and the best way to maintain a reasonable price for infant formula is to ensure a stable and sufficient supply. In addition, the Consumer Council also releases information of major brands of infant formula through the CHOICE Magazine and its website, including the out-of-stock rate, prices, customer services information and hints for switching formula for babies, etc. Such information will increase the market transparency and competition.

The Administration will continue to keep close liaison with the major suppliers, importers and retailers of infant formula and take corresponding actions to jointly ensure their stable supply in the local market.

(c) The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends breastfeeding as the way of providing the best food for healthy growth and development of infants. It recommends that babies under six months of age should preferably be exclusively breastfed, and then continue to be breastfed along with supplementary foods up to two years of age or beyond. The Government has all along endeavoured to promote, protect and support breastfeeding and to implement this policy through the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority. Healthcare professionals provide counselling service for breastfeeding mothers, and help post-natal women acquire breastfeeding skills and tackle the problems they may encounter during breastfeeding. Maternal and Child Centres under DH also conduct workshops to equip breastfeeding working mothers with the necessary skills so that they are prepared for continuing breastfeeding after returning to work. To enhance parents' understanding on diet for babies and infants, DH plans to produce a parenting education kit on healthy diet for babies and infants, which will include a handbook, education VCDs and recipes, etc. so as to disseminate positive health information among parents.

Besides, the Government is now in the process of drafting a Hong Kong Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (the Hong Kong Code). The Hong Kong Code aims to regulate the manufacturers and distributors of breast-milk substitutes and to prohibit them from advertising and marketing their breast-milk substitutes and related products by way of malpractice. In developing the Hong Kong Code, the Government will take into account the details and scope of regulation recommended in the WHO Code. When the Hong Kong Code comes into effect, we will monitor its implementation to ensure that the correct information reaches the parents.

Ends/Wednesday, April 6, 2011
Issued at HKT 15:16

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Press Releases 4 May 2011

LCQ4: Supply of infant formula

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Cheng and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Gabriel Leung, in the Legislative Council today (May 4):

Question:

Regarding the problems of the short supply of and the speculative surge in the prices of milk powder locally, the Secretary for Food and Health, in reply to a question at the Council meeting on February 16 this year, advised that the Government had been proactively liaising closely with major milk powder suppliers, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Pharmacy and major retailers, and that the suppliers and retailers of milk powder had actively taken steps to meet the market demand. Yet, it has been reported that as milk powder has remained in short supply in Hong Kong at the retail level since the Chinese New Year, members of the public still have difficulties in purchasing milk powder, and apart from relying solely on the voluntary actions and self-discipline of the suppliers and retailers of milk powder, the Government has not taken any measure to stabilise the supply and prices of milk powder in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it will consider setting up milk powder retail outlets at the hospitals and clinics under the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health, or setting up milk powder retail outlets in collaboration with other social welfare organisations, and giving priority to Hong Kong people with infants or young children in making purchases at these retail outlets, in order to solve the problem of Hong Kong people being unable to purchase milk powder; if it will, when the plan will be implemented; if not, of the reasons for that and whether other effective measures are in place to help members of the public purchase milk powder?

Reply:

President,

The Government cares about babies' health and has been promoting the merits of breastfeeding in order to encourage its adoption by parents. The Government also understands that some parents still prefer infant formula, and has therefore paid particular attention to its safety and supply. Since the reports of shortage of infant formula, we have been proactive in liaising closely with major infant formula suppliers, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Pharmacy and major retailers. We have been assured by the suppliers that they have sufficient stock on hand, and that they will increase supply to cope with the growing market demand.

The major infant formula suppliers have all agreed that meeting the needs of local babies is their prime responsibility, and they have been closely monitoring the market situation. If necessary, arrangements will be made for increasing supply in Hong Kong to ensure a stable supply of infant formula in the local market. The major brands have already set up hotlines or purchase and delivery services to ensure that the needs of local babies are met. Individual suppliers have pointed out that there

has been an upward trend in requests for purchase and delivery services from their members, which shows that the public has got used to purchasing infant formula under the membership system.

Retailers have also been closely monitoring the sale situation, particularly those retail outlets in areas near the boundary and along the East Rail Line. They have actively approached the suppliers to discuss arrangements for increasing supply and delivery to expedite replenishment, so as to meet the demand of the market. Some retail outlets have set sale quota for certain brands of infant formula in order to cater for the demand of local citizens.

While considering whether infant formula should be sold by public organisations, we must balance it with the Government's policy in promoting breastfeeding. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends breastfeeding as the way of providing the best food for healthy growth and development of infants. It recommends that babies under six months of age should preferably be exclusively breastfed, and then continue to be breastfed along with supplementary foods up to two years of age or beyond. The Government has all along endeavoured to promote, protect and support breastfeeding and to implement this policy through the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA). Healthcare professionals provide counselling service for breastfeeding mothers, and help post-natal women acquire breastfeeding skills and tackle the problems they may encounter during breastfeeding. Maternal and Child Centres under DH also conduct workshops to equip breastfeeding working mothers with the necessary skills so that they are prepared for continuing breastfeeding after returning to work. To enhance parents' understanding on diet for babies and infants, DH plans to produce a parenting education kit on healthy diet for babies and infants, which will include a handbook, education VCDs and recipes, etc. so as to disseminate correct health information among parents. Besides, public hospitals have banned promotional activities on breast-milk substitutes within their premises. Starting from April 1, 2010, HA purchases milk powder from contract suppliers by tender and no longer accepts free samples of breast-milk substitutes. It is also stipulated in the tender contracts that the suppliers must comply with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes of the World Health Organisation (WHO Code), which aims at ensuring that the sale and advertising of breast-milk substitutes will not discourage breastfeeding so as to achieve more effective implementation of the breastfeeding policy in hospitals.

The Government is now in the process of drafting a Hong Kong Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (the Hong Kong Code). The Hong Kong Code aims to regulate the manufacturers and distributors of breast-milk substitutes and to prohibit them from advertising and marketing their breast-milk substitutes and related products by way of malpractice. In developing the Hong Kong Code, the Government will take into account the details and scope of regulation recommended in the WHO Code. When the Hong Kong Code comes into effect, we will monitor its implementation to ensure that the correct information reaches the parents.

Hong Kong practices free trade. With an open and fair trading platform and transparent information, the stable and sufficient supply of infant formula by traders is ensured and a reasonable price for infant formula is maintained. The Consumer Council also releases information of major brands of infant formula through the CHOICE Magazine and its website, including

the out-of-stock rate, prices, customer services information and hints for switching formula for babies, etc. Such information will increase the market transparency and competition. Although there are shortages in the supply of particular brands at certain times, the overall supply of infant formula is still sufficient. We consider that the existing measures have helped stabilise the supply of infant formula. The Administration will continue to keep close liaison with the Consumer Council, major suppliers, importers and retailers of infant formula to jointly ensure the stable supply of infant formula in the local market.

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