

立法會
Legislative Council

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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting

**held on Tuesday, 11 February 2014, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex**

- Members present** :
- Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan (Chairman)
 - Hon Steven HO Chun-yin (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
 - Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
 - Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
 - Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
 - Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
 - Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
 - Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
 - Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
 - Hon Claudia MO
 - Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
 - Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
 - Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
 - Hon CHAN Han-pan
 - Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
 - Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
- Members absent** :
- Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
 - Hon WONG Yuk-man
 - Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

Public Officers : Item III
attending

Mr Christopher WONG Kwok-bun, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Mr Clive LAU Siu-ki
Senior Agricultural Officer (Regulatory)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Item IV

Professor Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Christopher WONG Kwok-bun, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Mr LAU Che-wong
Assistant Director (Operations) 1
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr CHOW Chor-yiu
Head (Risk Assessment Section), Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item V

Professor Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Philip CHAN Kwan-ye, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Dr HO Yuk-yin, JP
Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment
and Communication), Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Clerk in : Ms Alice LEUNG
attendance : Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

Staff in attendance : Miss Carrie WONG
Assistant Legal Adviser 4

Mr Jove CHAN
Senior Council Secretary (2) 2

Mr Richard WONG
Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Emma CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

Action

I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)839/13-14(01) and CB(2)840/13-14(01))

Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

- (a) Joint letter dated 7 February 2014 from Hon Steven HO and Hon CHAN Han-pan proposing a duty visit to Taiwan to study on its agriculture development; and
- (b) Letter dated 7 February 2014 from Hon WONG Kwok-hing concerning about the detection of excessive cadmium in rice.

Suggestion of conducting a duty visit to Taiwan

2. Members noted that the Deputy Chairman and Mr CHAN Han-pan had written a joint letter to the Chairman suggesting the Panel to conduct a duty visit to Taiwan for the purpose of obtaining first-hand information on its latest development on new cultivation techniques, new species of crops, pollution-free pig farming and brand building for the livestock industry, etc. The Deputy Chairman and Mr CHAN Han-pan said that the Chief Executive had indicated in his Policy Address 2014 that the Government would review its agricultural policy to enhance productivity and promote sustainable development. They considered Taiwan's experience was worth studying.

3. Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that although he would not participate in the proposed duty visit, he had no objection to the suggestion made by the Deputy Chairman and Mr CHAN Han-pan. Pointing out that most of the food supplied in Hong Kong was imported from the Mainland, he wondered whether it was more appropriate for the Panel to consider visiting the Mainland to study the agricultural development there. The Chairman said

Action

that consideration should be given to conduct a visit to Guangdong Province to better understand the regulation and operation of registered farms which supplied food such as live poultry, fish and vegetables to the Hong Kong. She suggested that the scope of the proposed duty visit should include agricultural development and regulation of food safety.

4. Mr WU Chi-wai considered that the policy on agriculture development was a big issue and there should be a study on the major issues and concerns of agricultural development in Hong Kong before deciding on whether or not to conduct the proposed overseas duty visit. Echoing Mr WU Chi-wai's view, Ms Claudia MO concurred that it was important to define clearly the purpose of the visit. She said that she was supportive to the proposed duty visit to Taiwan to study the experience in green farming. The Deputy Chairman said that Taiwan had in recent years advocated the concept of "clean pig farming" and its experience would be relevant to Hong Kong.

5. The Chairman summed up that in order to facilitate the Panel's consideration of the proposal of conducting an overseas duty visit, the Panel would request the Research Office ("RO") of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat to conduct a preliminary research on the agricultural development as well as regulation of food safety in Taiwan and the food control measures by the Guangdong Province authorities on food exports to Hong Kong.

(Post-meeting note: The Panel noted the fact sheets entitled "Guangdong's regulation of food exports to Hong Kong" and "Food Safety in Taiwan", as well as the information note entitled "Taiwan's agricultural policy" prepared by RO at its meeting on 13 May 2014. At members' request, the information note on Taiwan's agricultural policy was subsequently updated and circulated to members vide LC Paper No. 2004/13-14 on 8 July 2014.)

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)806/13-14(01) and (02))

Regular Panel meeting in March 2014

6. Members agreed to discuss the following items as proposed by the Administration at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 11 March 2014 at 2:30 pm -

- (a) Implementation of the Food Safety Ordinance;

Action

- (b) Report on the Food Surveillance Programme for 2013; and
- (c) Application of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources to Hong Kong.

Detection of excessive cadmium in rice

7. Mr WONG Kwok-hing suggested discussing the detection of excessive cadmium in rice at the next meeting. Members agreed to request the Administration to provide the recent test results/reports of the samples of rice conducted by the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS"), and address the issue under the item "Report on the Food Surveillance Programme for 2013".

Clerk

8. The Chairman informed members that she had also written to the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") in December 2013 expressing concern about the detection of excessive cadmium in rice imported from the Mainland. She instructed the Clerk to Panel to circulate to members her letter to the Administration and the Administration's responses respectively to her letter and the letter from Mr WONG Kwok-hing when available.

(Post-meeting note: The Chairman's letter to the Administration and the Administration's reply to her letter were circulated to members on 13 February and 3 March vide LC Paper No. CB(2)873/13-14(01) and CB(2)985/13-14(01) respectively. The Administration's response to the letter from Mr WONG Kwok-hing was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)953/13-14(01) on 25 February 2014.)

Latest development on the prevention and control of avian influenza

9. The Chairman suggested to request the Administration to brief the Panel at the next regular meeting on the latest progress on the proposal of segregating the imported and local live poultry and holding the imported poultry at a suitable location until the avian influenza ("AI") testing results were available before their release to the wholesale poultry market. Members agreed to include an item on the latest development on the prevention and control of AI in the agenda of the March regular meeting. In the view that there would be four discussion items for the next regular meeting, members further agreed to extend the meeting to 5:00 pm to allow sufficient time for discussion.

Visit to the Airport Food Inspection Office

10. In the light of the latest status of the release of radioactive substances in the environment by the damaged nuclear power plant in Fukushima

Action

prefecture in Japan, Mr WU Chi-wai expressed grave concern about the safety of food products imported from Japan. He suggested the Panel to consider arranging a visit to the Airport Food Inspection Office to better understand the food surveillance and tests, in particular the examination of radiation level, on imported food conducted by CFS. Members agreed that the visit should be arranged before the regular meeting in March to facilitate the discussion on the items relating to food surveillance.

(Post-meeting note: The visit the Airport Food Inspection Office was subsequently scheduled to be held on 7 March 2014.)

III. Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department fees and charges

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)806/13-14(07) and (08))

11. At the invitation of the Chairman, Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)1 ("DSFH(F)1") briefed members on the proposed revision of 18 fees items for services provided by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)806/13-14(07)).

12. Members also noted the information note entitled "Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department fees and charges" (LC Paper No. CB(2)806/13-14(08)) prepared by LegCo Secretariat.

13. Considering that the rates of increase in fees and charges proposed by the Administration were not very high and the proposed revision of fees and charges under AFCD should not have much impact on the general public, Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed support for the Administration's proposal. While expressing support for the proposal to revise 18 fee items for services provided by AFCD, Mr WU Chi-wai was concerned about the cost recovery rates after the adjustments. The Chairman expressed concern whether the increased cost of the services would be shifted onto the public.

14. The Deputy Chairman noted from the Administration's paper that under the charging policy of the Government, the fees and charges of the services provided by AFCD were determined according to the "user pays" principle at levels that could enable the Government to recover the full costs of the services provided. He enquired about how the costs were worked out and whether the Administration had implemented measures to control and reduce the costs of these 18 fee items concerned.

Action

Admin

15. DSFH(F)1 responded that in line with the "user pays" principle, it was Government's policy that fees and charges of Government services should in general be set at levels sufficient to recover the full costs of providing the services. The costs of the 18 fee items concerned included the direct and indirect expenditure attributable to the provision of the services such as staff cost and the cost of equipment (for example, computers) for handling and vetting the licence/permit applications. He further said that for fee items which involved higher number of users/applicants, AFCD would seek to further reduce their costs through enhancing efficiency and streamlining procedures including computerizing the working process. At the request of the Deputy Chairman, DSFH(F)1 would provide supplementary information on the Administration's accounting principles and costing methods for the formulation of the proposed adjustments on AFCD fees and charges.

16. Mr WONG Kwok-hing pointed out that the fees and charges for most of the 18 fee items had not been revised since 1997. He opined that should the Administration review and revise regularly the fees and charges, the proposed rates of increase might be even more modest. The Chairman and Mr WU Chi-wai expressed similar concern and enquired how frequent the Administration would review AFCD's fees and charges.

17. DSFH(F)1 advised that with the economic downturn in Hong Kong since 1997, the Government had frozen a number of fees and charges to alleviate the public's burden. In light of the economic situation, the Financial Secretary indicated in the 2013-2014 Budget Speech that the Government would review the fees and charges to prevent cost recovery items from being turned into heavily subsidized items. AFCD had conducted a costing review on the 18 fee items and proposed to adjust these fee items with increases ranging from 9% to 20%. DSFH(F)1 further said that the costs of these fee items would be reviewed regularly having regard to the "user pays" principle. Generally speaking, cost reviews would normally be conducted annually. For services which involved only a few users, the cost reviews of such items might be conducted at longer intervals.

18. Noting that AFCD had only received feedback from two persons during the public consultation exercise on the fees revision, the Chairman asked whether the Administration had consulted all stakeholders who might be affected by the proposed fees revision. DSFH(F)1 advised that AFCD had issued about 1 700 letters to the existing licensees and permittees under the Pesticides Regulations (Cap. 133A), the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Exhibitions) Regulations (Cap. 139F) and the Public Health (Animals) (Riding Establishment) Regulations (Cap. 139J) such as pesticide traders, pet shops and companies running riding establishments informing them of the fees revision proposal. AFCD had so far received feedback from two persons.

Action

19. The Chairman concluded the discussion that the Panel did not object to the Administration's proposal for revising 18 fees items for services provided by AFCD.

IV. Regulatory control on sale of chilled meat in fresh provision shops
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)806/13-14(05) and (06))

20. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the enhanced regulatory control measures on the sale of chilled meat and poultry in fresh provision shops ("FPSs") introduced by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in response to the recommendations of The Ombudsman made in his Direct Investigation Report on the Regulation of Sale of Chilled Meat ("the Ombudsman Report") released in October 2013, with details as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)806/13-14(05)).

21. Members also noted the information note entitled "Regulatory control on sale of chilled meat in fresh provision shops" (LC Paper No. CB(2)806/13-14(06)) prepared by LegCo Secretariat.

Regulatory control on sale of chilled meat in FPSs

22. Mr WONG Kwok-hing subscribed to the views and recommendations of the Ombudsman Report. Noting that from 2013 to mid-January 2014, FEHD only issued a total of 48 verbal warnings and 10 warning letters to FPSs for the improper storage or display for sale of chilled meat or poultry, and detected only one case of sale of chilled poultry as fresh poultry in a FPS, Mr WONG questioned whether this reflected that the enforcement actions taken by FEHD were not stringent enough. He also expressed concern that if chilled meat or poultry and frozen meat were not kept and displayed for sale at appropriate temperature, bacteria would proliferate and it would pose health risk to consumers. The Chairman, the Deputy Chairman and Mr WU Chi-wai expressed similar views and considered that the practice of issuing three written warnings in a period of six months before cancellation of licence was too lenient. They urged the Administration to step up the enforcement actions.

23. Dr KWOK Ka-ki noted from the background brief that FEHD had taken enforcement actions against selling of chilled/frozen meat/poultry as fresh meat/poultry and this had resulted in the cancellation of one food premise licence in 2010, the termination of two market stall tenancy agreements in 2011 and the termination of one market stall tenancy

Action

agreement in 2012. He commented that this reflected the need to increase the inspection frequency of FPSs.

24. USFH and Assistant Director (Operations)1/FEHD ("AD(Ops)1/FEHD") advised that since the end of 2011, the FEHD had been taking steps to gradually tighten the regulatory measures against such irregularities in relation to transportation, storage or display for sale of chilled meat and poultry at improper temperatures. The timeframe allowed for rectification upon issue of the verbal warnings and warning letters had been shortened. Starting from June 2013, all FPS licensees were required to take immediate rectification actions upon receipt of the relevant warnings. If a licensee had been issued with three written warnings within a period of six months and a subsequent breach was detected thereafter, FEHD would consider cancelling the licence. Regarding members' concern on the sale of chilled meat and poultry as fresh meat and poultry in FPSs, USFH stressed that suspected cases would be promptly investigated with enforcement actions taken where appropriate. Breaching the relevant licensing condition was liable to result in immediate cancellation of the licence concerned. FEHD would increase the frequency of surprise inspections to FPSs which had been issued with warnings for breaches of licensing conditions governing the proper storage of chilled meat and poultry, and lengthen the observation period to enhance the effectiveness of the regulatory regime and the deterrence against such irregularities.

25. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman were concerned whether FEHD had adequate manpower to conduct the inspections and take enforcement actions against those irregularities and breaches. The Chairman and Mr WONG Kwok-hing also expressed concern about the inspections of improper storage and display for sale of chilled meat and poultry in public markets managed by FEHD, particularly those where air-conditioning facilities had not been installed.

26. USFH advised that FEHD adopted a Risk-based Inspection System ("RBIS") through which resources were allocated on a priority basis to the inspection of licensed food premises with higher risks and with lower hygiene standards. Licensed food premises selling chilled meat and poultry were inspected once every four, 10 or 20 weeks depending on their respective risk type under RBIS, whereas stalls in public markets with permission to sell chilled meat and poultry were inspected once every eight weeks. FEHD had formulated clear guidelines to define minor breaches and enforcement actions for strict observance by inspection officers. If a subsequent breach by the FPS concerned was detected, enforcement action would be taken under the Warning Letter System.

Action

Admin

27. In response to Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che's and Mr WU Chi-wai's requests, USFH undertook to provide after the meeting information on the number of regular and surprise inspections to FPSs that FEHD had made in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, the number of staff responsible for conducting the inspections, and the number of verbal warnings and warning letters issued to FPSs for improper storage or display for sale of chilled meat or poultry in the past three years.

Admin

28. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was concerned about the tests conducted by CFS for the samples of meat and poultry taken from FPSs selling chilled meat and poultry. He enquired whether CFS had tested the amount of pathogens (including bacteria) in chilled meat and poultry. Head (Risk Assessment Section), CFS responded that when a piece of meat was placed in an environment of unsuitable temperature or high humidity, the micro-organisms (including bacteria and mould) on it could breed to great quantities, resulting in spoilage of the meat and degradation of its flavour. Consumption of spoiled meat containing pathogens might lead to food poisoning. However, micro-organisms such as pathogens could be killed in the process of cooking. At the request of Dr KWOK, USFH agreed to provide after the meeting information on the profile of pathogens (including bacteria) tested by CFS for samples of chilled meat and poultry collected from FPSs.

Enhancing release of information and publicity

29. Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that one of the recommendations made in the Ombudsman Report was that FEHD should release information through media about FPSs which were persistently involved in irregularities and upload such information on to the website of FEHD for easy public access. In his view, timely release of information on the irregularities of FPSs would help safeguard the health of consumers and have a deterrent effect on the operators of FPSs. He criticized FHB for failing to ensure that FEHD had implemented the recommendation made in the Ombudsman Report.

30. While concurring that there was a need for FEHD to strengthen the release of information about FPSs which were persistently involved in irregularities, Dr Kenneth CHAN expressed a strong view that FEHD should enhance the transparency of information on all types of irregularities of FPSs found and publicize the information on FEHD's website. In his view, this would help facilitate members of the public to monitor the compliance of FPSs in respect of the licensing conditions for selling chilled meat and would encourage the compliance of FPSs with the relevant licensing conditions.

Action

31. USFH advised that FEHD had taken measures to implement the recommendations of The Ombudsman in respect of the release of information. FEHD would release information through the media about FPSs whose licences had been cancelled due to persistent breaches of the licensing conditions and was prepared to upload such information to the website of FEHD for easy public access. As regards Dr Kenneth CHAN's suggestion, USFH said that FEHD would consider how to disseminate information about the irregularities of FPSs to the public in the most effective manner.

32. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che enquired about FEHD's efforts in enhancing publicity and public education to inform the public of the health risks of consuming spoiled meat and of the ways to distinguish between fresh meat and defrosted meat. USFH and AD(Ops)1/FEHD advised that FEHD had published leaflets and posters on the proper storage of chilled meat and poultry to promote public awareness that chilled meat and poultry must be stored and displayed for sale at a temperature between 0°C and 4°C in FPSs and that otherwise, FPSs would have breached the relevant licensing conditions. FEHD had also enhanced the training for its officers responsible for inspections at FPSs and provided them with guidelines to ensure the proper conduct of inspections.

Other issues

33. Pointing out that the Chinese rendition for "chilled meat" (i.e. "冰鮮肉") was an oxymoron, Dr Kenneth CHAN suggested the Administration to consider using another Chinese expression of the term of "chilled meat" in the licensing requirements/conditions for FPSs/market stalls that were endorsed/permitted to sell chilled meat and poultry. Mr WU Chi-wai said that it was undesirable to allow licensees holding FPS licences to sell fresh meat, chilled meat and frozen meat at the same premises, having regard that different storage facilities were required for storing and displaying these three types of meat. USFH explained that, at present, different licensing conditions were specified in the FPS licences for the sale of fresh meat, chilled meat and frozen meat. She said that the Administration noted members' views.

(Post-meeting note: Administration's further information on the number of staff responsible for conducting inspections to FPSs and its enforcement actions against irregularities related to improper storage or display for sale of chilled meat and poultry in fresh provision shops, and the profile of pathogens (including bacteria) tested by CFS for samples of chilled meat and poultry collected from FPSs is provided vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2061/13-14(01) on 16 July 2014)

V. Total diet study

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)806/13-14(03) and (04))

34. At the invitation of the Chairman, USFH and Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication), CFS ("Consultant, CFS") briefed members on the progress of the first Total Diet Study ("TDS") in Hong Kong conducted by CFS, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)806/13-14(03)).

35. Members also noted the background brief entitled "Total Diet Study in Hong Kong" (LC Paper No. CB(2)806/13-14(04)) prepared by LegCo Secretariat.

TDS and population-based Food Consumption Survey

36. While welcoming the conduct of TDS by CFS, Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed concern about the second population-based Food Consumption Survey ("FCS") under planning by CFS. In the light of longevity of Hong Kong's population, people would be more concerned about the threats posed by diseases such as high blood pressure and cholesterol level, diabetes, and heart disease. He enquired about the Administration's plan to study how the public could reduce the intake of sodium and sugars, thereby assisting the public, in particular the elderly and patients, to maintain good health. USFH said that CFS had published a number of leaflets to promote low-sodium and low-sugar diets, and provided advices to the catering trade to produce and promote food products with lower sodium and lower sugar contents. She also informed members that the Steering Committee on Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases set up under the Department of Health had been promoting healthy diets to the public.

37. Mr Alan LEONG noted from the Administration's paper that the food consumption data for TDS were taken from the first population-based FCS conducted by CFS in 2005-2007 and the data were obtained through a quota sampling by gender and age groups. He enquired whether consideration had been given to the income levels of the samples taken as people of different income groups might have different diet habits. Expressing similar concern, Dr KWOK Ka-ki hoped that CFS would advise the lower income groups on how they could choose healthier and nutritious food products and develop healthy diets.

38. Consultant, CFS advised that the food consumption data were taken from the Hong Kong population-based FCS conducted by CFS in 2005-2007. Data were obtained by two non-consecutive 24-hour dietary questionnaires of 5 008 Hong Kong adults aged 20 to 84. The survey captured over 1 400 food

Action

items that were being consumed by Hong Kong people. The TDS food list, which included 150 food items, were developed based on the food consumption data derived from FCS. Foods included in the TDS food list were those normally consumed by Hong Kong people, regardless their income levels. Consultant, CFS further said that food items that were consumed in low level but carried particular substances of potential concern and food items associated with the presence of certain substances (such as contaminants) were also included. Should there be a need for carrying out an analysis of the dietary exposure of the samples by their income levels, the required data were available. However, it should be noted that people from different income groups might be subject to similar food safety risks depending on their respective dietary intake.

39. Mr Alan LEONG enquired how TDS could help monitor the food safety risks of food that was of concern to the public. USFH explained that the food consumption data taken from FCS provided the basis for TDS to obtain a more comprehensive and accurate estimation of the dietary exposure of the Hong Kong population to a range of substances and thus TDS could help assess the associated health risks and monitor food safety risks. Consultant, CFS added that a working group had been formed to prepare for the second population-based FCS. Subject to the results of the evaluation of the first TDS and the food safety risks of concern by that time, CFS would plan for the scope of food items and substances to be studied in the second population-based FCS.

40. Pointing out that the first population-based FCS obtained food consumption data from adults aged 20 to 84, Dr KWOK Ka-ki was concerned whether the Administration had a good understanding of the food consumption pattern of persons aged five to 20. Consultant, CFS advised that CFS had conducted a survey in 2000 to collect data on food consumption of secondary school students and a number of risk assessment studies had been conducted using that dataset. Further specific studies on the diets of adolescents would be considered on need basis.

41. Expressing concern about the presence of inorganic arsenic in rice, the Chairman said that in her view, CFS should conduct studies to identify the levels of cadmium and inorganic arsenic present in rice imported from different countries and make public the study results. Consultant, CFS advised that rice, being staple foods for the local population, were found to be the main dietary source of inorganic arsenic for the local population. Individuals who wished to reduce exposure to inorganic arsenic might consider choosing cereals other than rice, which generally contained lower levels of inorganic arsenic, as part of their diet. They might also wash rice thoroughly and discard the washed water before cooking to reduce their inorganic arsenic intake.

Action

42. Noting that the cost involved in conducting the first TDS was \$5.4 million, Mr Alan LEONG expressed concern about the cost for conducting the second population-based FCS. Consultant, CFS advised that no additional cost would be incurred as laboratory analysis of food samples would be performed by using CFS's existing resources.

Risk communication

43. Ms Cyd HO considered that when issuing press releases to advise consumers of the health risks of certain food items, CFS should provide more comprehensive information, including whether the substances present in certain food items were carcinogenic and whether the substances persist in the environment, to assist the public to understand better the associated health risks posed by harmful substances in food. The Chairman expressed similar view and urged CFS to publicize all of the reports of food safety studies for public access so that the public could make informed choices. She was concerned whether CFS would publicize the food safety information of threats posed to particular groups of population (e.g. pregnant women) through various channels. In her view, CFS should adopt a more proactive approach in publicizing information on health advices. She suggested CFS to hold regular press conferences to disseminate information regarding results of its studies and tests.

44. Dr KWOK Ka-ki pointed out that certain advices made by CFS, such as washing vegetables in clean running water for one hour, were not practicable. Dr KWOK and the Chairman held similar views that CFS should consider how the information on the dietary exposure of the Hong Kong population could be disseminated to the public effectively, thus providing practical tips on food safety and healthy diets to the public.

45. Consultant, CFS advised that the Risk Communication Section of CFS had made timely publication of the TDS reports to the public through CFS website, road shows as well as seminars, and also exchanged views with the trade through trade consultation forums, with a view to lowering food safety risks through changing the dietary behaviour of the public. Leaflets about food safety risks were also published and distributed through relevant channels, e.g. distributing leaflets about exposure to dioxins to pregnant women through maternal and child health centres, hospitals and clinics.

Toxic substances and pesticides residues in food

46. Ms Cyd HO expressed a strong view that CFS should adopt the most stringent standards for toxic substances and pesticides residues in food in order to safeguard public health. Consultant, CFS explained that CFS would

Action

take into account nature of the substances concerned when considering the appropriateness of the food safety standards to be adopted. Therefore, in considering the acceptable levels of dietary exposure to pesticides residues, field tests had to be conducted to assess acceptable levels of pesticides to achieve adequate pest control. Such levels would vary from place to place due to different climate and physical environment. The setting of the maximum residue limits for pesticide-food pairs was based primarily on the available standards recommended by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, supplemented by standards of food exporting countries available.

VI. Any other business

47. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:36 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
21 August 2014