



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

Our Ref.: FHB/F/5/1/37

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Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Democratic Party Legislative Councillors' Office
Room 909-914, 9/F
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr WONG Hon-ming)

Dear Hon. Wong,

**Concern over Safety of Food Products from
Fukushima and Nearby Prefectures in Japan**

Thank you for your letter of 9 September 2013 expressing concern about the safety of food products imported from Japan.

Since the nuclear power plant incident in Fukushima, Japan in March 2011, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has promptly adopted the Guideline Levels for Radionuclides in Foods Contaminated Following a Nuclear or Radiological Emergency (Guideline Levels) laid down by the Codex Alimentarius Commission¹ (Codex) for testing the radiation levels of every consignment of food products (including aquatic products) imported from Japan to ensure food safety. Such radiation testing, targeting Japanese food imports, has been maintained since then.

¹ The Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) was established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization as an international authority responsible for the setting of food-related standards and guidelines.

As at 2 October 2013, over 150,000 samples of food products imported from Japan had been tested. Among them, three samples of vegetables imported from Chiba prefecture shortly after the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident were detected with radioactive substances at levels exceeding the Guideline Levels, posing hazards to human health. The three vegetable samples had been disposed of and did not find their way into the local market.

After the radiation levels of the above three samples of vegetables were found to have exceeded the Guideline Levels, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued an Order on the following day (i.e. 24 March 2011) to prohibit the import of fruits and vegetables, milk, milk beverages and milk powder from the five most affected prefectures of Japan, namely Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma and Chiba. Apart from testing of radiation levels of every consignment of food products imported from Japan as mentioned above, CFS also prohibits the import of all chilled or frozen game, meat and poultry, all poultry eggs and all live, chilled or frozen aquatic products from the five prefectures to Hong Kong from 24 March 2011, unless accompanied by a certificate issued by the competent authority of Japan certifying that the radiation levels do not exceed the Guideline Levels laid down by Codex. The Order remains in force today.

Regarding the questions raised in your letter, our reply is as follows:

- (1) From 11 March 2011 up to the present, no aquatic products were imported from the Fukushima and Gunma prefectures to Hong Kong. During this period, there were 13 consignments of aquatic products imported from Ibaraki, Tochigi and Chiba prefectures, while those imported from Aomori, Miyagi and Iwate prefectures totaled around 300. About 380 samples were collected by CFS for testing of radiation levels. The results were satisfactory in all cases.
- (2) At present, aquatic products imported from five prefectures (namely Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma and Chiba) must be accompanied by a certificate on radiation level issued by the competent authority of Japan and have to pass CFS' radiation

testing of food samples. As for aquatic products from the other three prefectures (i.e. Aomori, Miyagi and Iwate), CFS also collects samples from each consignment for radiation testing.

CFS will continue with its current strategy of surveillance on the radiation level of every consignment of food products imported from Japan and will adopt a risk-based approach in collecting samples for radiation testing, with reference made to the test results of the Japanese authority and Hong Kong.

- (3) In response to public concern over food products contaminated by radiation, the CFS has released the results of the targeted radiation testing on all food products imported from Japan on its website on every working day since 16 March 2011 and updated the surveillance figures accordingly.

As at 2 October 2013, CFS tested over 150,000 samples of food products imported from Japan, including more than 20,000 samples of aquatic products. After the Order came into effect, the testing results of all aquatic products have been satisfactory.

- (4) In the wake of the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident, CFS has been closely monitoring the developments. CFS will continue to test every consignment of food products imported from Japan and adopt a risk-based approach in collecting samples for radiation testing, with reference made to the test results of the Japanese authority and Hong Kong. CFS will also keep track of the situation of the Fukushima nuclear power plant and developments in related regions as well as the latest measures taken by other countries/places against food products imported from Japan. In the meantime, CFS will keep in view and refer to the recommendations made by international agencies including the World Health Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency on the issue, for developing strategies for testing of relevant food products in Hong Kong and adjusting the surveillance measures on Japanese food imports in time to ensure food safety and protect public health.

CFS currently adopts the Codex Guideline Levels as standards for radiation testing. The standards are as follows:

iodine-131: 100 Bq/kg

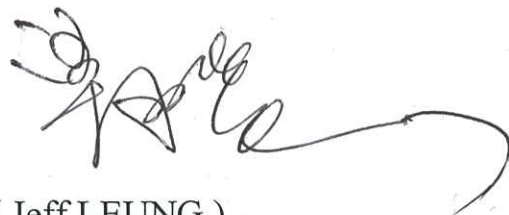
caesium-134 and caesium-137: 1,000 Bq/kg

According to Codex, food products which contain radionuclides not exceeding the relevant standards are considered to be safe for human consumption.

If food is found to have contained radionuclides exceeding the Guideline Levels, CFS will immediately detain the consignment and arrange for disposal. In parallel, in order to prevent or reduce danger to public health, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will consider issuing an order under the Food Safety Ordinance (Cap. 612) to prohibit the import of food products from the affected prefectures of Japan so as to ensure food safety and protect public health.

Thank you once again for your interest in food safety and your valuable advice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jeff Leung', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

(Jeff LEUNG)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
(Attn.: Mr WONG Tun-ming, Donald) (Fax: 2530 1368)