



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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電話號碼 Tel nos. : 3509 8925
傳真號碼 Fax nos. : 2136 3281

By Fax: 2509 9055

26 November 2013

Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Chairman of the LegCo Panel on
Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Hon Wong,

**Request for the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
to discuss the problem of added colouring matter “copper chlorophyll”
found in Taiwanese noodle products**

On 8 November 2013, Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long wrote to the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene (the Panel) expressing concerns over recent media reports about the problem of added colouring matter “copper chlorophyll” found in Taiwanese noodle products. The Panel Secretariat subsequently relayed those concerns to the Secretary for Food and Health, vide its letter dated 12 November 2013. I am authorized to reply on his behalf.

The added colouring matters alleged to be involved in this case are copper chlorophyll and sodium copper chlorophyllin. In early November this year, the Taiwan authority discovered that certain food factories had, during food preparation, illegally added copper chlorophyll to products including noodles. To protect public health, the Centre for Food Safety

(CFS) immediately contacted the relevant Taiwan authority for more information. CFS also contacted major local retailers to see whether they have imported the food products concerned into Hong Kong. According to the current investigation results, no products covered by the media reports are available for sale in the local market.

Copper chlorophyll and sodium copper chlorophyllin are produced by extracting chlorophyll from plants, followed by a process of chemical stabilisation. Both copper chlorophyll and sodium copper chlorophyllin are food additives permitted for use by the Codex Alimentarius Commission¹. According to the evaluation report of the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives, there is no evidence to show that the intake of copper chlorophyll and sodium copper chlorophyllin from food can cause liver damage.

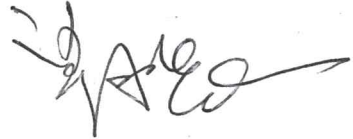
At present, the use of colouring matters in food is regulated under the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations (Cap. 132 sub. leg. H) (the Regulations) in the food laws of Hong Kong. The addition of colouring matters in food must comply with the legislative requirements. The Regulations provide that no food intended for sale for human consumption shall contain any added colouring matter which is not a permitted colouring matter. Both copper chlorophyll and sodium copper chlorophyllin are permitted colouring matters listed in Part II of the First Schedule to the Regulations. If food manufacturers use copper chlorophyll or sodium copper chlorophyllin in food preparation according to good manufacturing practices, the food should not pose hazard to the health of consumers.

CFS conducts regular food surveillance based on risk assessment. Samples are taken at the import, wholesale and retail levels and tested for chemicals (including testing of colouring matters). Last year, CFS collected over 1 900 food samples for testing of colouring matters. One sample of yellow curry paste was detected to contain non-permitted colouring matters, namely Sudan red I and Dimethyl yellow. The testing results for all other samples were satisfactory. CFS will continue to keep in view further developments surrounding the recently reported case in Taiwan

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

and conduct appropriate risk assessment. Follow-up actions will also be taken when necessary to ensure food safety and protect public health.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Leung', with a long horizontal stroke 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)