

(Translation)

(Letterhead of Food and Health Bureau)

8 May 2015

Clerk to LegCo Panel on Food Safety and
Environmental Hygiene
(Attn.: Ms. Alice LEUNG)
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax: 2509 9055)

Dear Ms Leung,

**Request for following up the illegal import of
carrots from radiation-contaminated areas in Japan**

Thank you for referring to us the letter of Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan to the Chairman of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene concerning the captioned subject. Regarding the concern of Dr Hon WONG, our response is as follows:

Existing food safety prohibition order against and radiation testing on food imported from Japan

2. After the nuclear power plant incident in Fukushima, Japan in 2011, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene made an order under section 78B of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) (the Order) to prohibit the import of all vegetables and fruits, milk, milk beverages and milk powder from the five most affected prefectures (namely Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Chiba and Gunma) of Japan. In addition, all chilled or frozen game, meat and poultry, all poultry eggs and all live, chilled or frozen aquatic products from those five prefectures are required to be accompanied by a certificate issued by the Japanese authorities certifying that the radiation levels do not exceed the standards laid down by the guidelines before they can

be imported into Hong Kong. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of HK\$100,000 and to imprisonment for 12 months.

3. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) has also stepped up radiation testing on food imported from Japan at import, wholesale and retail levels to ensure food safety. As at May 2015, CFS has examined a total of over 250 000 relevant samples. With regard to Japanese food imported by sea, CFS will contact the importers for inspection according to the information stated in the import clearance documents. During the inspection, importers are required to produce information about the source of the Japanese food imported to help CFS verify that the food is not from the five Japanese prefectures on which import restrictions are imposed.

Illegal import of carrots from Chiba to Hong Kong

4. CFS received a complaint in January 2015 relating to suspected violation of the Order mentioned in paragraph 2 above by importing restricted food for sale in Hong Kong. CFS took immediate follow-up actions, including tracing the sources and distribution of the food in question and taking samples for testing.

5. CFS found at the initial stage of investigation that the carrots in question had been purchased by the importer “JSS Company Limited” via a Japanese trading company and imported to Hong Kong by sea in January 2015. As incorrect address of the importer was produced when the said consignment of carrots underwent import clearance, CFS was unable to contact the importer immediately for inspection of the carrots. The importer had also failed to register as a food importer under the Food Safety Ordinance (Cap. 612).

6. Subsequently, CFS got in touch with the importer. The importer provided CFS with the information sent to him by the Japanese trading company showing that the 10 boxes (10 kilograms per box) of carrots were originated from Chiba.

7. According to the information provided by the importer, the majority of the carrots in question were either rotten and disposed of or for personal consumption. Only two boxes were sold to “伍記欄 鮮菓皇” at the Yau Ma Tei Wholesale Fruit Market and one of them was sold as reported by the retailer. CFS marked and sealed the remaining box and took samples for testing of radiation levels. The results were satisfactory.

8. CFS disclosed to the media the names of the importer and retailer concerned on 9 March 2015.

Follow-up work

9. Although the carrot samples from that consignment passed the radiation testing and posed no food safety risk to the public, CFS is considering pursuing legal actions and seeking legal advice for this purpose.

10. CFS will continue to follow up the incident, including reviewing the current mechanism for inspection of food imported from Japan at the import level and improving the surveillance arrangements so as to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents. CFS will also remind importers of Japanese food that the Order is still in force, and will enhance its cooperation with relevant departments in monitoring the import of Japanese food so as to safeguard food safety and public health in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

(Kenneth Chan)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Controller, Centre for Food Safety