

(Translation)

(Letterhead of Food and Health Bureau)

本函檔案 Our ref. : FHB/F/5/4
來函檔案 Your ref. : CB2/PL/FE

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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 detection of
Listeria monocytogenes in smoked salmon**

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, in which she expressed concern over a recent case of *Listeria monocytogenes* being detected in some smoked salmon processed in Hong Kong.

2. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) received a notification from the Macau authorities earlier that a batch of smoked salmon imported from Hong Kong was found in their testing to have been contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*. CFS took immediate follow-up actions by requesting the Macau authorities to provide further information, including testing results, details and photos of the affected food, etc. CFS also contacted the Hong Kong manufacturer concerned, Polyfood Food Service Co Ltd, immediately for more information about the incident and sent staff to its manufacturing plant for investigation and taking of samples for testing. For the sake of prudence, CFS instructed the trader

concerned to recall the affected batch of products and provide information on their distribution for follow-up. CFS issued a press release and informed the trade of the incident on 29 March 2015.

3. On 2 April 2015, CFS received a report that a sample of another batch of smoked salmon taken from the plant of that manufacturer was detected with a small amount of *Listeria monocytogenes*. Taking into account the testing results, CFS immediately instructed the manufacturer to recall all smoked salmon produced, regardless of the brand and batches, and suspend the relevant production line to carry out thorough cleansing and disinfection. A press release and an alert to the trade were issued on the same day. The follow-up work is still underway.

4. Regarding the questions raised in the letter of Dr Hon WONG, our reply is as follows:

Question 1

5. Upon receipt of the notification from the Macau authorities, CFS has been closely monitoring the development of the incident and taking appropriate follow-up actions. As informed by the manufacturer concerned, Polyfood Food Service Co Ltd, on 28 March 2015, the batch of smoked salmon contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* detected by the Macau authorities had been sold out with no stock left. The amount of products involved was 70 kg according to a preliminary estimate. On 30 March 2015, the manufacturer provided revised information and informed CFS that after verification, the affected batch of smoked salmon sold in Hong Kong should be over 700 kg. CFS updated the media on the same day.

Question 2

6. As mentioned above, CFS found on 2 April 2015 *Listeria monocytogenes* in a smoked salmon sample taken earlier from that manufacturer. Taking into account the testing results, CFS immediately instructed the manufacturer to recall all smoked salmon produced, regardless of the brand and batches, and suspend the relevant production line to carry out thorough cleansing and disinfection. A press release and an alert to the trade were issued on the same day.

Question 3

7. CFS had all along monitored the recall exercise by the manufacturer concerned. On 8 April 2015, CFS was informed that a total of about 4 500 kg smoked salmon products of different brands and batches had been recalled from distributors and retail outlets, and the recall exercise had been completed as instructed. CFS staff also conducted inspections at local retail outlets and no affected products were found available for sale.

Question 4

8. In response to the incident, CFS had taken a total of 38 samples (including 29 salmon samples and nine environmental samples) from the manufacturer concerned. Apart from a smoked salmon sample which was detected with *Listeria monocytogenes* as announced on 2 April 2015, all results were satisfactory.

Question 5

9. Upon receipt of the notification from the Macau authorities, CFS took immediate follow-up actions and instructed the manufacturer concerned, Polyfood Food Service Co Ltd, to recall the affected batch of products and trace its distribution. Subsequently, CFS found that a sample of another batch of smoked salmon taken from the same manufacturer had been detected with *Listeria monocytogenes*. The manufacturer was immediately instructed to recall all smoked salmon produced, regardless of the brands and batches, and suspend the relevant production line to carry out thorough cleansing and disinfection. Taking into account the development of the incident, CFS issued press releases and alerts to the trade on 29 March and 2 April 2015, urging the public not to consume any smoked salmon produced by the manufacturer concerned, regardless of the brands, batches or packaging. The trade should also stop selling all affected products immediately and provide the public with the enquiry hotline of the manufacturer.

10. CFS had been closely monitoring the recall exercise. On 8 April 2015, the manufacturer concerned reported to CFS that the exercise had been completed as instructed and that it had notified those downstream traders which had ordered the affected products of the recall. In the meantime, CFS staff conducted inspections at local retail outlets and no affected products were found available for

sale. So far there are no reported cases of people feeling sick after consuming the smoked salmon produced by the manufacturer. With the information provided by the manufacturer and the investigation results of CFS, it is believed that the recall exercise has largely been completed. Hence, CFS is of the view that there is no need to announce the names of the downstream traders. CFS will continue to closely follow up the incident and take appropriate actions 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