

(Translation)

(Letterhead of Food and Health Bureau)

本函檔案 Our ref. :
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9 July 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,

**Matters relating to regulatory framework for
food imported via sea route**

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. Regarding the concern of Dr Hon WONG, our response is as follows:

Following the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in Japan in 2011, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS), according to a risk-based approach, has enhanced testing of food imported from Japan for radiation at the import, wholesale and retail levels. The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene made an order on 24 March 2011 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. All chilled or frozen game, meat and poultry, all poultry eggs and 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 guideline levels before they can be imported into Hong Kong. As at 30 May 2015, CFS had

examined a total of over 250,000 samples. Except for three unsatisfactory samples of vegetables from Chiba found on 23 March 2011, the test results of all samples were satisfactory.

For Japanese food products imported by sea, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) will notify CFS daily of the manifest data on food products imported. The importers should also notify CFS. Based on the information, CFS will contact the relevant importers to arrange for the testing of the radiation levels of the food products. Regarding the illegal import for sale of a batch of carrots from Chiba in January 2015, CFS was unable to contact the relevant importer immediately for testing of the radiation levels due to the incorrect address provided on the manifest. At that time, CFS also received a complaint relating to suspected violation of the Order by selling restricted Japanese food in Hong Kong. The case was then revealed after CFS' investigation. Following that, apart from opening a case for investigation, CFS took samples of the carrots concerned for testing of the radiation levels and the results were satisfactory. The trade was also reminded again to observe the Order strictly. In addition, both the Food and Health Bureau and CFS had contacted the Japanese authorities to express concern and requested them to enhance the dissemination of the requirements of the Order to the trade in Japan, and step up their gate-keeping efforts at the export end.

The existing import monitoring mechanism of CFS covers air, land and sea. For food products imported by sea, they are inspected at the importers' warehouses or chiller plants; for fresh food imported by land from the Mainland, at the Man Kam To Food Control Office; and for food imported by air, at CFS' Airport Office. Samples of food will also be taken at retail level for testing. CFS has taken action to review the existing import monitoring mechanism. To better monitor food products imported via container terminals, CFS is actively discussing with C&ED the possibility of setting up an inspection check point at container terminals for testing food products imported by sea, with a view to enhancing the surveillance of such products to further safeguard food safety.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

(Kenneth Chan)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.: Controller, Centre for Food Safety (Fax: 2536 9731)