



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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Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan
Chairman of the Panel on Food Safety and
Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
[Fax: 2509 9055]

Dear Hon Tommy Cheung,

**Response to Dr Hon Helena WONG's Questions
Regarding the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation**

I refer to the letter dated 8 December 2014 from Dr Hon Helena WONG regarding the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (the Regulation).

Between the period of 1 August 2014 when the Regulation came into operation and 31 December 2014, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) took over 10 700 food samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for testing of pesticide residues. A total of 39 vegetable and fruit samples were detected as having excessive pesticide residues. The overall unsatisfactory rate was less than 0.4 per cent.

The Government is committed to enhancing food safety through a multi-pronged approach. It adopts the “from farm to table” strategy to safeguard public health by ensuring that food consumed by the public meets safety standards. This includes proper control at source as well as surveillance at the import, wholesale and retail levels.

Regarding the issues raised by Dr Hon Helena WONG in her letter, our reply is as follows.

Q (1) & (2)

According to the “Administrative Measures on the Quarantine of the Vegetables Supplied to Hong Kong and Macao” (Administrative Measures), the State General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) is the approving and supervising authority of the registered vegetable farms and production and processing establishments. According to the updated list provided by AQSIQ on 9 December 2014, there are currently 459 vegetable farms on the list of registered farms eligible for exporting vegetables to Hong Kong. A mechanism is in place in the Administrative Measures to delist vegetable farms and production and processing establishments.

The supply of vegetables by Mainland vegetable farms and processing establishments is affected by a number of factors, including commercial decision on ratio of domestic and export sales, weather, harvest, demand and consumption pattern of Hong Kong people etc. These factors also influence the volume of vegetables supplied by individual vegetable farms and processing establishments.

Every year, CFS will first submit to AQSIQ an initial request for inspection of registered farms supplying vegetables to Hong Kong, and later confirm the list of registered farms to be inspected in consultation with the relevant local authorities having regard to the actual circumstances at the time. On the basis of mutual trust, we have to respect the arrangements made by the Mainland authorities regarding inspections and enforcement. As for surprise inspections proposed by Dr Hon Helena Wong, considering the fact that inspections have to be arranged through the relevant Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities, CFS will relay Dr Hon Helena Wong’s proposal to them.

The scope of CFS' inspection is mainly based on a series of codes of practice making up the Good Agricultural Practices, covering crop production, application and storage of pesticides and fertilizers, the environment of vegetable farms and management of farms, etc. CFS officers will also examine the relevant documents and records to review the farm's general operation. Falsification or fabrication as mentioned by Hon Helena Wong is rare as documents and records need to demonstrate coherence and consistency. Any irregularities or deficiencies observed during the inspection will be raised at the closing meeting and recommendations for rectification will be made to the farm concerned. If necessary, CFS officer will recommend the relevant Mainland authorities to consider taking follow-up actions in accordance with the Administrative Measures. The relevant Mainland authorities will follow up on the rectification measures taken by the farm and report the progress to CFS. The suggestions made by CFS have all along been effectively addressed.

Q (3), (4) & (5)

The Government is very concerned about the problem detected under the food surveillance program that some vegetables allegedly imported from the Mainland might originate from vegetable processing establishments not registered with the Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities. The Administration alerted AQSIQ and relevant inspection and quarantine authorities of the problem in November 2014 and appealed for their prompt follow-up actions including stepping up of interception at various control points. CFS will maintain close communication with the relevant Mainland authorities to monitor the progress.

At our end, CFS and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) have been working closely and conducting joint operations from time to time to inspect vehicles carrying vegetables. The interception strategy will be adjusted in response to different circumstances to ensure effectiveness of the operations. In the joint operations of CFS and C&ED conducted in September, October, November and December 2014, 495, 521, 508 and 531 vegetable vehicles were inspected respectively.

We believe that some vegetables from unknown sources are imported into Hong Kong through vehicles other than open topped vegetable vehicles normally used by the trade. Accordingly, CFS has optimised the inspection measures for inbound vegetable vehicles since 2 December 2014. CFS would collect information on the aforesaid high

risk inbound vehicles by making reference to previous inspection records and intelligence shared by C&ED, etc. When these vehicles arrive at the control point, CFS officers will direct the driver to the Man Kam To Food Control Office for inspection. If the driver fails to do so, the vehicle registration mark will be referred to C&ED for follow-up actions.

Q (6)

As the standards set out in the Regulation are different from the criteria adopted by CFS in previous years, it is not appropriate to compare the food surveillance results before and after the implementation of the Regulation.

Q (7)

CFS will trace the source of the unsatisfactory samples. The time taken depends on a number of factors, including information provided by the vendor concerned, progress made by the relevant Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities. For details of these unsatisfactory samples as requested by Dr Hon Helena Wong in her letter, please see the Annex.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henry Lai', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

(Henry Lai)

for Secretary for Food and Health

Annex

Details of unsatisfactory samples detected by CFS (As at 31 December 2014)

	Food	Pesticides involved	Testing results (ppm)	Statutory Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) / Extraneous Maximum Residue Limits (EMRLs) (ppm)	Testing results of the Multiple of Statutory MRLs/ EMRLs
1	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.17	0.1	1.7
2	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.36	0.1	3.6
		Acephate	4.3	1	4.3
		Methamidophos	0.34	0.05	6.8
3	Choisum	Cyhalothrin	0.4	0.2	2.0
4	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.71	0.1	7.1
5	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.41	0.1	4.1
		Acephate	2.1	1	2.1
		Methamidophos	0.12	0.05	2.4
6	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.44	0.1	4.4
		Methamidophos	0.094	0.05	1.9

	Food	Pesticides involved	Testing results (ppm)	Statutory Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) / Extraneous Maximum Residue Limits (EMRLs) (ppm)	Testing results of the Multiple of Statutory MRLs/ EMRLs
7	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.76	0.1	7.6
8	Water spinach	Methamidophos	0.27	0.05	5.4
9	White string pod	Carbofuran	1.4	0.1	14
		Chlorpyrifos	0.032	0.01	3.2
10	Green string pod	Carbofuran	1.2	0.1	12
11	Green string pod	Carbofuran	4.4	0.1	44
12	White string pod	Acephate	2.5	1	2.5
		Methamidophos	0.25	0.05	5.0
13	White string pod	Carbofuran	0.68	0.1	6.8
14	Chili	Triazophos	0.026	0.02	1.3
15	Water spinach	Trichlorfon	2.284	0.1	23
16	Water spinach	Trichlorfon	0.146	0.1	1.5

	Food	Pesticides involved	Testing results (ppm)	Statutory Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) / Extraneous Maximum Residue Limits (EMRLs) (ppm)	Testing results of the Multiple of Statutory MRLs/ EMRLs
17	Baby Chinese green	Carbofuran	0.038	0.02	1.9
18	Chinese white cabbage	Chlorpyrifos	0.16	0.1	1.6
19	Chinese lettuce	Methomyl	0.36	0.2	1.8
20	Water spinach	Dimethoate	2.804	1	2.8
21	Purslane	Dimethoate	5.2	1	5.2
22	Chinese lettuce	Methamidophos	0.11	0.05	2.2
23	Chayote	Methamidophos	0.61	0.05	12
24	Chinese lettuce	Methomyl	0.33	0.2	1.6
25	Baby Chinese green	Methamidophos	0.33	0.05	6.6
26	Chinese wolfberry leaf	Acetamiprid	3.979	3	1.3
27	Chinese white cabbage	Carbofuran	0.041	0.02	2.0
28	Chinese wolfberry leaf	Cypermethrin	8.7	2	4.4

	Food	Pesticides involved	Testing results (ppm)	Statutory Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) / Extraneous Maximum Residue Limits (EMRLs) (ppm)	Testing results of the Multiple of Statutory MRLs/ EMRLs
29	Radish shoot	Cypermethrin (leaf)	5.3	2	2.6
		Cypermethrin (root)	0.17	0.01	17
30	Orange	Thiabendazole	19.58	10	2.0
31	Water spinach	Chlorpyrifos	0.544	0.1	5.4
32	Pear	Dichlorvos	0.26	0.2	1.3
33	Choisum	Chlorpyrifos	0.76	0.1	7.6
34	Grapefruit	Thiabendazole	13	10	1.3
35	Water spinach	Chlorpyrifos	0.5	0.1	5.0
36	Choisum	Chlorpyrifos	0.18	0.1	1.8
37	Choisum	Cyhalothrin	0.57	0.2	2.8
38	Green string pod	Carbofuran	0.49	0.1	4.9
39	Orange	Profenofos	0.5	0.1	5.0