

(Translation)

(Letterhead of Food and Health Bureau)

本函檔案 Our ref. : FH/CR/5/1886/07
來函檔案 Your ref. : CB(2)428/14-15(01)

電話號碼 Tel nos. : 3509 8925
傳真號碼 Fax nos. : 2136 3282

5 March 2015

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

Dear Hon Cheung,

**Question raised by Hon WONG Kwok-hing
concerning the smuggling of vegetables from the Mainland**

I refer to the letter dated 23 February 2015 from Hon WONG Kwok-hing concerning the captioned question.

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 not only surveillance at the import, wholesale and retail levels, but also proper control at source.

As the Mainland is the major source of vegetables to Hong Kong, the Government and the Mainland authorities established administrative arrangements on 1 November 2009 under which vegetables supplied to Hong Kong must come from registered vegetable farms and production and processing establishments under the supervision of relevant Entry-Exit

Inspection and Quarantine Bureaux in accordance with the requirements set out in the Administrative Measures on the Quarantine of the Vegetables Supplied to Hong Kong and Macao.

Under the existing administrative arrangements between the HKSAR Government and the Mainland regulatory authorities, all vegetables supplied to Hong Kong for the purpose of sale must come from registered vegetable farms and production and processing establishments under the supervision of relevant Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureaux, accompanied by relevant supporting documents and affixed with labels on the packaging for transport (e.g. basket or carton) showing information about their origin. All fresh vegetables entering Hong Kong from the Mainland via land route must be imported through the Man Kam To Control Point. Officers of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) inspect the vegetable vehicles at Man Kam To Food Control Office (MKTFCO).

CFS has been mindful of the cases where vegetables are brought, in the name of self-consumption, into Hong Kong by travellers via the Lo Wu Control Point for the purpose of sale. Although it is difficult to eliminate or guard against such behaviours, CFS has spared no efforts in taking enforcement actions. In fact, CFS maintains close liaison with the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) and exchanges intelligence on activities of importing vegetables through control points other than MKTFCO. To intercept such activities, C&ED and CFS conduct joint operations from time to time. If travellers are found to have brought a substantial amount of vegetables into Hong Kong which are suspected not to be consumed by themselves, C&ED refers the cases to CFS for follow-up.

In February 2015, a total of nine cases of bringing a substantial amount of vegetables into Hong Kong detected at the Lo Wu Control Point were referred to CFS. CFS officers took immediate follow-up actions and conducted investigations accordingly, and the vegetables were voluntarily surrendered by the travellers for disposal. CFS will continue to conduct joint operations with C&ED to ensure food safety of imported vegetables.

CFS will also step up efforts to educate vegetable sellers and importers, promote the Administrative Measures on the Quarantine of the Vegetables Supplied to Hong Kong and Macao, and advise vegetable sellers and importers to import vegetables from registered farms and production and

processing establishments registered with the relevant authorities on the Mainland. Besides, CFS will remind them that the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap. 132 CM) (the Regulation) came into operation on 1 August 2014. If excessive pesticide residues are found in the vegetables sold by them, they have to bear the legal liabilities and relevant penalties under the Regulation. Any person who imports, manufactures or sells any food not in compliance with the requirements of the Regulation concerning pesticide residues commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

In addition to the control at source mentioned above, CFS also adopts a risk-based approach in its routine Food Surveillance Programme and takes samples of food (including vegetables) at import, wholesale and retail levels for testing, to ensure that the foods offered for sale comply with legal requirements of Hong Kong and are fit for human consumption.

Since the implementation of the Regulation on 1 August 2014 and up to 31 January 2015, CFS had collected 13 200 samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for pesticide residue tests, and found excessive pesticide residues in 49 vegetable samples. The overall unsatisfactory rate is less than 0.4%. CFS will follow up on the unsatisfactory results, including tracing the source of the food in question and taking different samples of vegetables for testing.

CFS will continue to ensure the safety of vegetables supplied to Hong Kong through control at source, Food Surveillance Programme and enforcement actions at control points.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

(Jeff Leung)

for Secretary for Food and Health