

(Translation)

(Letterhead of Food and Health Bureau)

本函檔案 Our ref. :
來函檔案 Your ref. :

電話號碼 Tel nos. : (852) 3509 8701
傳真號碼 Fax nos. : (852) 2136 3282

13 September 2017

Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Attn.: Miss Josephine SO)
(Fax: 2509 9055)

Dear Miss So,

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Information Requested by Members**

Issues Relating to the Arrangement for Import of Hairy Crabs

At the meetings of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene held on 19 December 2016 and 11 April 2017, Members requested the Government to provide supplementary information on the issues relating to the arrangement for import of hairy crabs. The relevant supplementary information is set out below.

Action Levels of Dioxins and Dioxin-like Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

In response to the incident on dioxins detected in foods in Europe, the then Hygiene Division of Department of Health has set an action level of 1 picogram (pg) toxic equivalent per gram of the food sample for dioxins in 1999 and has started taking food samples for dioxin testing since then (testing for dioxin and dioxin-like PCBs in hairy crabs started in 2014).

The Centre of Food Safety (CFS) of Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has kept on making reference to the regulatory arrangement of different places and the local situation. Having taken into the fact that other jurisdictions (EU and Taiwan) have set statutory maximum levels for dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs detected in hairy crabs, the results of local studies on dietary intake of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs, and local dietary habits (i.e. people in Hong Kong generally consume both the brown meat and white meat of hairy crabs), CFS categorically set an action level of 6.5 pg toxic equivalent per gram for hairy crabs in 2016.

Import Arrangement for Hairy Crabs in 2017

To ensure that hairy crabs for sale in Hong Kong comply with the statutory requirements and are fit for human consumption, CFS will continue to take samples for testing, including testing of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs. Also, CFS will check the health certificates. Following the incidents of hairy crabs detected with dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in end-2016, CFS met and exchanged with the trade in January 2017 on CFS' work in monitoring dioxins in foods and matters relating to the import arrangement for hairy crabs including the discussion on several trade facilitating measures, for example, the trade may consider importing suitable size of consignments of hairy crabs at the early stage of the coming hairy crab season. CFS will adopt a risk-based sampling strategy and collect hairy crab samples for testing and notify the relevant importers of the results as soon as possible. The trade could consider withholding the hairy crabs from entering into the market before the release of satisfactory testing results of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs so as to protect food safety and public health, and also to facilitate the trade as far as possible. CFS will continue to keep in touch with the Mainland inspection and quarantine authorities.

CFS will continue to keep in view the monitoring and regulatory arrangements and measures over dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in food in the international arena, surveillance results of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in hairy crabs, local dietary habits and other relevant factors, with a view to considering the need to prescribe the limit on the level of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in hairy crabs by legislation. We will report to the Panel on the work progress in this respect in due course.

Others

Regarding the enquiry about compensation or ex-gratia payments, a one-off ex-gratia payment of about \$300,000 was granted by FEHD to retailers affected by an incident of live pigs tainted with prohibited veterinary drug which occurred in early August 2016. The amount was intended to cover the financial loss to the retailers concerned in relation to the pork and offal disposed of in the incident, and was calculated based on the retail price of pork published by the Census and Statistics Department. No compensation or ex-gratia payment was granted in relation to any other food safety incidents in the past 5 years.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

(Ricky Cheng)

for Secretary for Food and Health

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