



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

Our Ref : FHB/H/24/2
Your Ref : CB2/PL/HS

Tel : 3509 8956
Fax : 2840 0467

27 April 2017

Ms Maisie LAM
Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Hong Kong
(Fax : 2185 7845)

Dear Ms LAM,

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Legislative Proposal for Conferring Power on the Director of Health
to Issue Recall Order under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549)**

I refer to the discussions on the captioned subject at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Health Services (the Panel) held on 28 February 2017 and on the paper regarding the regulation of pesticide residues and heavy metals in Chinese herbal medicines (Chms) (LC Paper No. CB(2)859/16-17(07)) submitted by the Government to the Panel on the same day. In response to the Members' request for supplementary information on the collection of samples of Chms from the market for testing of their pesticide residues and heavy metal contents, our reply is as follows.

Definition of Chms

2. According to the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap.549) (CMO), Chms refer to the toxic Chms specified in Schedule 1 to the CMO and the commonly used Chms specified in Schedule 2 to the CMO. Currently, 605 types of Chms are listed in the CMO, comprising 31 types of Schedule 1 Chms and 574 types of Schedule 2 Chms. The CMO also stipulates the scope of

application of Schedules 1 and 2. In general, the Chms specified in Schedules 1 and 2 shall apply to Chms in their dried or processed form.

Market surveillance mechanism for Chms

3. As stated in the above-mentioned paper, the Department of Health (DH) has put in place a market surveillance system, under which samples of Chms regulated under the CMO are collected from the market for testing on a regular basis to monitor if the quality and safety of the Chms meet the required standards. The regular testing items include:

- (a) pesticide residues (including 20 testing parameters of organochlorine pesticides and 17 testing parameters of organophosphorus pesticides);
- (b) heavy metal contents (including arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury);
and
- (c) morphological identification.

4. The standards currently used for testing of pesticide residues and heavy metal contents in Chms sold in Hong Kong are formulated by the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK) with reference to other relevant international standards. As regulatory authorities around the world are increasingly concerned about the possible health effects of pesticide residues and heavy metals on human, the CMCHK has been reviewing the limits and scope of pesticide residues and heavy metals in Chms, as well as the sampling strategy of the market surveillance system from time to time to safeguard public health.

5. The testing of pesticide residues and heavy metal contents in Chms is carried out by the Government Laboratory (GL) and consists of two stages. The first stage involves tests on the Chm samples in their raw state before decoction to test whether they contain the aforesaid 37 pesticides and 4 heavy metals and the respective residue levels/contents. The second stage test is conducted to assess the quantity of pesticide residues or heavy metals in the decoction of the Chms concerned. Testing for pesticide residues and heavy metal contents in the decoctions of Chms is considered to be a closer simulation of the condition during human consumption which is more appropriate for human risk assessment. The procedures and scope of tests are recognised by both the CMCHK and the international expert group of the Scientific Committee set up under the Hong Kong Chinese Materia Medica Standards project.

Number of Chm samples for the testing of pesticide residues and heavy metal contents

6. Currently, there are around 300 types of Chms being sold in Hong Kong. From 2014 to 2016, the DH collected under its regular market surveillance system a total of 1,131 Chm samples from the market for testing by the GL, involving 247 types of Chms which covered about 80% of the Chms available in Hong Kong. None of the above Chm samples was found to have exceeded the limits set by the CMCHK for the specified 37 pesticide residues and 4 heavy metals after decoction. A breakdown of the Chm samples taken by the DH is tabulated as follows:

Year	Chm samples taken from Hong Kong market		
	Number of Chm samples taken	Type of Chms involved*	Percentage [#]
2014	374	187	62%
2015	377	173	58%
2016	380	193	64%

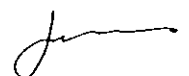
(Note: * Some Chms were sampled from the market more than once from 2014 to 2016.

Percentage against the 300 types of Chms currently available in Hong Kong.)

7. Since February 2017, the DH has increased the targeted number of market surveillance samples of Chms from 30 to 45 per month, and extended the sampling scope to include wholesalers in addition to retailers, with the target of covering all Chms currently available for sale in local market within a year.

8. Being a major re-export hub for Chms from the Mainland, Hong Kong imports a huge volume of Chms. According to the information from the Census and Statistics Department, around 30,000 tonnes of Chms were imported into Hong Kong in 2016. However, there is no statistical breakdown by the type of imported Chms.

Yours sincerely,



(Mr James LAM)
for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c. Director of Health
(Attn: Assistant Director (Traditional Chinese Medicine))