

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1157/17-18(03)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Meeting on 10 April 2018

**Proposed overseas duty visit to Brazil
in August 2018**

Purpose

This paper seeks members' views on the proposal for the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") to conduct an overseas duty visit to Brazil to study its safety and quality control over frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat for export purpose.

The proposed visit

Background

2. According to an information paper provided by the Administration on 9 October 2017 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2188/16-17(01)), Brazil is Hong Kong's major supplier of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat. Under the existing agreement between Hong Kong and the Brazilian authorities on the import of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil, processing plants authorized by the Brazilian authorities for exporting frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat to Hong Kong should produce a health certificate issued by the local authorities for every consignment of such meat imported into Hong Kong.

Incident concerning the quality of meat products from Brazil

3. In March 2017, there were media reports about investigations conducted by the Brazilian authorities into suspected bribery of food safety control officials by meat producers in exchange for permission to sell and export allegedly contaminated meat. Some countries (including the Mainland China and Chile) as well as the European Union subsequently imposed either full or partial import ban on Brazilian frozen and chilled meat and poultry products.

The incident had aroused wide public concern over the safety of meat and poultry meat imported from Brazil into Hong Kong. As the quality of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat exported from Brazil was called in question, the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") temporarily suspended on 21 March 2017 the import of all frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil as a precautionary measure. On 28 March 2017, after taking into consideration the latest information available, including those provided by the Brazilian authorities¹, CFS announced that the scope of the import ban on frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil would be restricted to 21 meat plants which were under investigation.

4. Following the incident, CFS has started discussions with the Brazilian authorities to further improve the import arrangements for Brazilian frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat. Consideration has been given to restricting the number of Brazilian plants allowed to export products to Hong Kong, with a view to strengthening the import control over Brazilian meat products.

Incident of falsified health certificates for food imported from Brazil

5. In May 2017, CFS received a complaint lodged by a local importer about a suspicious health certificate accompanying a consignment of frozen chicken feet imported earlier in 2017 from Brazil. The food importer alerted the Consulate General of Brazil in Hong Kong ("Consulate General") and CFS for follow-up actions. On 30 August 2017, the Brazilian authorities confirmed that the health certificate was falsified and the related consignment of frozen chicken feet was pet food. CFS found during its follow-up investigation that between October 2016 and September 2017, a total of 10 consignments² of meat products (including the consignment involved in the complaint mentioned above) which were pet food had been exported from Brazil to Hong Kong by the exporter listed on the health certificate concerned. The health certificates of the 10 consignments of products were all issued on or before 21 March 2017, i.e. the day CFS announced the import ban on frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil. According to information provided by the importers involved, none of the 10 consignments of meat products had entered the local market. This notwithstanding, for the sake of prudence, CFS suspended the

¹ On 28 March 2017, the Brazilian authorities provided further information to CFS, including that they would strictly safeguard the international health certification process and the credibility of the surveillance system, and would continue to conduct regular audits of the system to ensure its operational efficacy. Moreover, apart from the 21 plants under investigation, there was no evidence of irregularities involving other meat plants authorized to export products to the international market. Those plants remained authorized by other countries or regions such as the Mainland, the European Union, Singapore, etc. to export meat products from Brazil to their destinations.

² They included eight consignments of frozen chicken feet, a consignment of cattle offal products and a consignment of pig offal products and pig feet.

import of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat into Hong Kong by that particular Brazilian exporter and two affected Brazilian production plants with effect from 21 September 2017.

Relevant discussions of the Panel

6. At the meeting on 8 April 2017, the Panel received the Administration's briefing on the follow-up actions taken by CFS in response to the incident concerning the quality of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil. Members were deeply concerned about the effectiveness of the current food monitoring system for imported foods which relied on production of health certificates issued by the authority of the place of origin. The incident of suspicious health certificates accompanying consignments of meat products imported from Brazil further heightened members' concern about CFS' food safety surveillance mechanism and control over imported food.

Objectives of the proposed visit

7. At the meeting on 14 November 2017, members agreed in principle that the Panel should conduct a duty visit to Brazil in August 2018³ to obtain first-hand information about the food safety and quality control as well as the surveillance work of the Brazilian authorities over frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat exported to other countries. Based on the views and suggestions expressed by members, the principal objectives of the proposed duty visit are as follows:

- (a) to understand the regulatory framework in Brazil governing the export of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat, including the statutory requirements, the food safety standards, the relevant sanitary compliance and inspection systems;
- (b) to study the health certification requirements and auditing process put in place by the Brazilian authorities, which are intended to ensure that meat products for export purpose are fit for human consumption;
- (c) to understand the surveillance and control measures taken by the Brazilian authorities in the wake of the incidents in March and May 2017 concerning the quality of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat exported to other countries, which are intended to address the problems identified and to ensure the food products' conformity with food safety requirements;

³ The proposal was made jointly by Hon Tommy CHEUNG and Hon CHAN Han-pan, as set out in LC Paper No. CB(2)325/17-18(01).

- (d) to exchange views with government officials in Brazil on food safety issues, with emphasis on the regulatory control over the export of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat;
- (e) to visit livestock and poultry farms in Brazil authorized to export meat products to the international market, slaughterhouses, livestock and poultry processing/manufacturing plants and government laboratories to observe the production line/the supply chain of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat; and
- (f) to meet with meat exporters/trade associations in Brazil to understand the logistics involved and the operation of the trade at export level.

8. The Research Office of the Information Services Division of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat has prepared for the reference of the Panel a fact sheet (LC Paper No. FS05/17-18) (see **Appendix I**), providing an overview of the meat products imported from Brazil to Hong Kong with respect to (a) the value, volume and composition of these products; (b) the existing quality assurance mechanism; and (c) the remedial measures taken by the Brazilian government in the wake of the Brazilian meat incidents as mentioned above.

Proposed timing of the visit

9. Taking into account the flight time required and to ensure that the delegation will have sufficient time to pay visits and to meet with relevant parties/organizations, it is suggested that the proposed visit lasts for eight days, tentatively from 12 to 19 August 2018. The LegCo Secretariat has sought the Consulate General's assistance in drawing up a visit programme and advice on the logistical arrangements. The tentative outline of programme is in **Appendix II**.

Composition of the delegation

10. The broad guidelines are that members of the Panel should have priority in participating in the visit. Non-Panel members may join the duty visit with the consent of the Panel.

Funding

11. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission, each Member is provided with an overseas duty visit ("ODV") account of \$55,000 for the purpose of conducting duty visits outside Hong Kong in the name of the Council or any of its committees. The fund in the ODV account is for use by

the Member in a four-year term. Any expenditure incurred in excess of the approved allocation has to be paid by the Member personally.

12. A preliminary estimate of the expenditure to be incurred by each participating Member for the visit is in **Appendix III**. A more detailed estimate will be worked out after the visit programme has been finalized.

Advice sought

13. Members are invited to give views on the proposed arrangements as set out in paragraphs 7, 9 and 10 above. Subject to members' views and decision, the Secretariat will proceed with the preparation work, and the House Committee's permission will be sought in accordance with House Rule 22(v) for the Panel to undertake the duty visit.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 April 2018



Research Office
Legislative Council Secretariat

Fact Sheet

Brazilian meat and meat products

FS05/17-18

1. Introduction

1.1 Brazil is one of the largest exporters of meat and meat products (hereinafter collectively known as "meat products") in the world, shipping to over 150 countries and supplying about 20% of the world's beef, pork and poultry.¹ Hong Kong is one of the biggest markets for Brazilian meat products.

1.2 On 17 March 2017, the Federal Police of Brazil unveiled an investigation on irregular practices of a group of public officials suspected of issuing health certificates for tainted meat products in exchange for bribes paid by some meat plant operators. The investigation led the Brazilian government to suspend the export licences of 21 meat plants which were involved in the investigation and remove 33 public officials from office. The incident has aroused global concern about the quality of the meat products exported from Brazil.

1.3 In the immediate aftermath of the above incident, Hong Kong's Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") announced a series of follow-up actions to ensure the safety of imported meat products from Brazil. These follow-up actions included: (a) stepping up surveillance of meat and poultry meat imported from Brazil for testing of meat deterioration and other food safety indicators; (b) imposing a temporary ban on the import of all frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat from Brazil from the evening of 21 March as a precaution, and announcing in the evening of 28 March 2017 that the scope of the import ban would be restricted to the 21 plants under investigation; and (c) ordering a recall of all frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat imported from the 21 meat plants concerned on 24 March 2017.²

¹ See Secretariat for Social Communication – International Area (2017).

² On 11 May 2017, CFS released all the recalled products following the Brazilian authorities' confirmation that the health certificates of the frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat exported to Hong Kong before the ban did not involve any irregularities, and the satisfactory inspection and surveillance testing results of the products.

1.4 In September 2017, CFS discovered several suspected falsified health certificates for imported frozen meat when it investigated a complaint lodged by a food importer in May 2017. The complaint was about a suspicious health certificate accompanying a consignment of frozen chicken feet imported earlier from Brazil, and the Brazilian authorities later confirmed that the health certificate concerned was falsified. Subsequent to the investigation, CFS has (a) suspended the import of meat products from the Brazilian exporter and the two Brazilian meat plants involved; (b) stepped up verification checks of all health certificates issued for frozen meat and poultry meat exported from Brazil to Hong Kong; and (c) discussed with the Brazilian authorities on more stringent import control of Brazilian meat products such as restricting the list and number of Brazilian meat plants authorized to export products to Hong Kong.

1.5 At the request of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, the Research Office has prepared this fact sheet to provide an overview of the meat products imported from Brazil to Hong Kong with respect to (a) the value, volume and composition of these products; (b) the existing quality assurance mechanism; and (c) the remedial measures taken by the Brazilian government in the wake of the Brazilian meat incident.

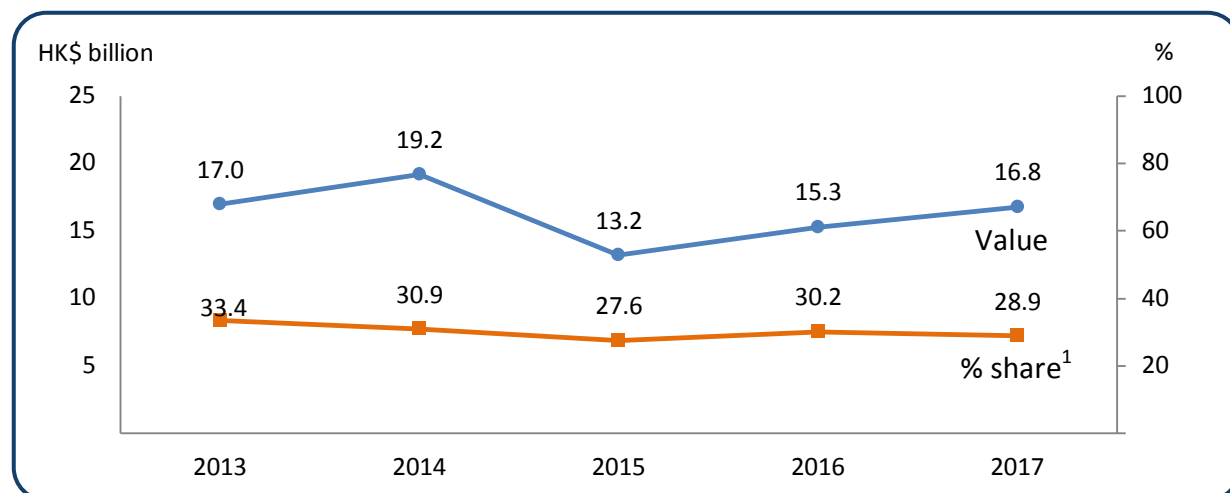
2. Imports of meat products from Brazil

2.1 Brazil has been one of the largest sources of imported food in Hong Kong, ranked the third largest in value terms after China and the United States in 2017. In 2017, Brazil shipped HK\$17.4 billion of food to Hong Kong and 96% of which were meat products.

2.2 Brazil is a major supplier of imported meat products in Hong Kong, supplying about 30% of Hong Kong's total imports of meat products in both value and volume terms in 2017 (**Figures 1 and 2**). Analyzed by product type, meat of swine, poultry and other animals, and edible offal (frozen, chilled or fresh) accounted for a significant share of the total volume of imports and retained imports³ of meat products from Brazil, at 71.8% and 55.7% respectively in 2017 (**Table 1**).

³ Retained imports of goods refer to those imported goods which are retained for use in Hong Kong rather than being re-exported to other places. The volume of retained imports of goods is derived by subtracting the volume of re-exports of goods from the volume of imports of goods.

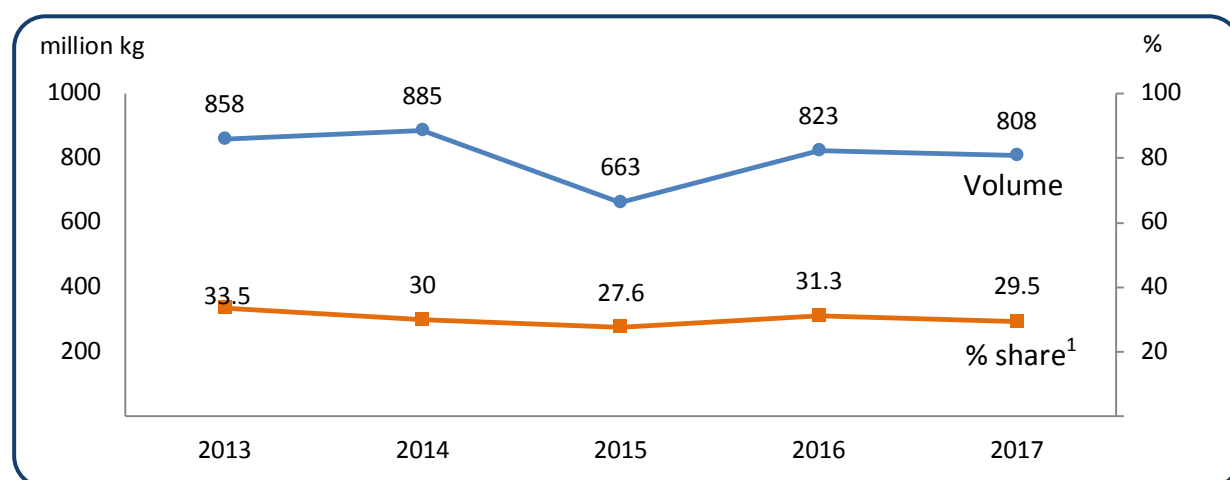
Figure 1 – Value of meat products imported from Brazil, 2013 – 2017



Note: (1) Percentage share of Hong Kong's total imports of meat products.

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

Figure 2 – Volume of meat products imported from Brazil, 2013 – 2017



Note: (1) Percentage share of Hong Kong's total imports of meat products.

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

Table 1 – Imports and retained imports of Brazilian meat products by product types, 2017

Types of meat and meat products	Imports		Retained imports	
	Volume (million kg)	Percentage of total imports	Volume (million kg)	Percentage of total retained imports
Meat of swine, poultry and other animals, and edible offal (frozen, chilled or fresh)	579.6	71.8%	265.7	55.7%
Meat of bovine animals (frozen, chilled or fresh)	213.3	26.4%	198.6	41.7%
Meat and edible meat offal (prepared or preserved)	14.6	1.8%	12.4	2.6%
Total	807.5	100	476.7	100

Source: Census and Statistics Department.

3. Quality assurance mechanism for Brazilian meat products

3.1 In Brazil, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply ("MAPA") is tasked with formulating and executing policies for promoting the sustainable development of the agribusiness for meeting the demand of the domestic and international markets. The Ministry is also entrusted with regulating the production, inspection and marketing of products of animal and plant origin. MAPA comprises, among others, five secretariats, 27 state superintendencies and their respective units, and a network of six national agricultural laboratories. MAPA has about 11 000 employees, of them 2 300 are responsible for inspection works.

3.2 The Department of Inspection of Products of Animal Origin ("DIPOA") under the Secretariat of Agricultural Protection of MAPA has implemented a series of quality control measures and programmes to ensure the quality of

products of animal origin for both the domestic and international markets. These measures and programmes include imposing registration, inspection and certification requirements on the production facilities and products, and implementing food safety control programmes to control pathogens, residues and contaminants in products.

Registration, inspection and certification of facilities and products

3.3 In Brazil, all business establishments exporting products of animal origin are required to register with and be approved by DIPOA. Approval to export products of animal origin is granted to a business establishment if it can (a) meet the specified sanitary, technical and legal requirements imposed on its facilities and operations; and (b) pass an inspection conducted by DIPOA. At present, about 4 840 business establishments are approved to export products of animal origin from Brazil. The operations and facilities of these business establishments are under the supervision and surveillance of DIPOA to ensure the quality and safety of their products.

3.4 The Federal Inspection Service under DIPOA is responsible for conducting on-site inspection and surveillance of the operations and products of the approved business establishments to ensure the quality of their products. The on-site surveillance activities include: (a) conducting ante- and post-mortem inspections of animals for slaughter; (b) verifying the self-control programmes⁴ implemented by the business establishments; (c) assessing the sanitary and operating conditions of the business establishments; (d) collecting product samples for laboratory analysis; and (e) conducting health certification for the products. The Federal Inspection Service is supported by a network of six national agricultural laboratories⁵ and 414 other laboratories accredited by MAPA for conducting chemical, microbiological and other analyses of the products.

3.5 Business establishments are all required to register their products of animal origin with DIPOA before they can sell their products in the domestic or international markets. Business establishments have to provide DIPOA with information such as the raw materials, production processes, and quality and

⁴ Business establishments are required to implement self-control programmes such as the Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures and the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point for ensuring the safety, quality and integrity of their products.

⁵ The national agricultural laboratories are also responsible for laboratory audits, research and development of analytical methods, and review of related legislation and technical guidelines.

safety control mechanisms and programmes adopted for registration. In addition, business establishments exporting their products are required to obtain the international health certificate issued by the Federal Inspection Service to indicate that the products have been inspected and meet the specified sanitary requirements.

Food safety control programmes

3.6 MAPA has implemented a number of food safety control programmes to monitor and control pathogens, residues and contaminants in products of animal origin. These programmes include:

- (a) the National Pathogen Control Programme – allowing identification of pathogens in products of animal origin which in turn helps DIPOA establish more accurate risk control measures;
- (b) the Physical/Chemical/Microbiological Standards Compliance Programme for Edible Animal Products – providing for the collection of data to verify the compliance of products to applicable content standards, evaluate the product and process controls implemented by the business establishments, and support DIPOA's risk management policies; and
- (c) the National Plan for Control of Residues and Contaminants – detecting and controlling the presence of residues of veterinary medicine and pesticides, and contaminants in food.

4. Government's remedial measures after the Brazilian meat incident

4.1 The outbreak of the Brazilian meat incident in March 2017 has aroused global concern about the quality of meat products exported from Brazil. In response, the Brazilian government has taken a series of remedial measures which include: (a) assigning special audit teams to conduct audit and inspection of the 21 meat plants involved in the incident; (b) ordering the closure of three of the 21 meat plants involved in the incident; (c) enhancing sampling of products involved in the incident for laboratory testing; and (d) strengthening the cooperation between MAPA and the Federal Police to investigate any deviations in the food quality surveillance system.

4.2 In December 2017, the Brazilian government has launched the Agro+ Integrity Programme with a view to encouraging adoption of transparent and ethical business practices in the agribusiness sector. Under the programme, agribusiness companies that act according to the rules can earn the "Agro+ Integrity Seal". A committee comprising members from the government, the business sector and the civic society will review the business practices of businesses participating in the programme. The committee will grant the "Agro+ Integrity Seal" to a business if it complies with the specified rules on areas such as preventing fraud and corruption and fulfilling social and environmental responsibilities.

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7 March 2018
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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Proposed overseas duty visit to Brazil

Proposed timing : 12 August (Sunday) to 19 August (Sunday) 2018

(Tentative outline of programme #)

Date	Programme
12 August 2018 (Sun)	➔ Departure from Hong Kong in the morning of 12 August and arrival in Sao Paulo in the afternoon on the same day (local time in Brazil)
<u>Sao Paulo/other cities</u>	
13 August 2018 (Mon)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply
14 August 2018 (Tue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to the following facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Import and Export Limited for Pork ➤ Livestock/poultry farms and manufacturing plants ➤ Official laboratory, LANAGRO
15 August 2018 (Wed)	
16 August 2018 (Thu)	
17 August 2018 (Fri)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing meeting with government officials
17 (Fri) or 18 (Sat) August 2018	➔ Departure from Sao Paulo for Hong Kong in the evening of 17 August or in the morning of 18 August and arrival in Hong Kong on 19 August (Sunday)

A detailed visit programme will be drawn up with the assistance of the Consulate General of Brazil in Hong Kong, subject to confirmation with the receiving parties/organizations.

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Proposed duty visit to Brazil
Preliminary estimate of the expenditure

Duration of visit : 12 to 19 August 2018 (8 days)
Routing of visit : Hong Kong / Sao Paulo / Hong Kong

Breakdown of expenses

Items	Estimated expenses HK\$ (per person)		
	Economy Class	Premium Economy Class	Business Class
1. Air passage ^(Note 1) Hong Kong/Sao Paulo/ Hong Kong	22,279	<i>Not available</i>	64,027
2. Hotel accommodation (60% of the subsistence allowance) ^(Note 2) Sao Paulo/other cities (5 nights)	8,391		
3. Meals, in-town travelling and sundries (40% of the subsistence allowance) ^(Notes 2 and 3) Sao Paulo/other cities	6,154		
4. Travel insurance	445		
5. Inoculation/vaccination ^(Note 4)	515		
TOTAL ^(Note 5) :	37,784	<i>Not available</i>	79,532

NOTE :

- Airfare quotation obtained in early April 2018. Price is inclusive of tax and surcharges.
- Exchange rates as at early April 2018:
BRL1 = HKD2.352
- Other expenditure including hospitality, interpretation services and souvenirs will be charged against other votes of the Secretariat. Where the expenses on in-town travelling is paid for by the Secretariat (if group transportation is arranged), 5% of the subsistence allowance will be deducted.

4. According to the Department of Health ("DH"), visitors travelling to Brazil are advised to receive yellow fever vaccination. As travellers with certain health conditions may not be suitable to receive yellow fever vaccination, they should seek doctor's advice before receiving the vaccine. DH's advice and details about yellow fever vaccination are accessible at <http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>.
5. The actual total expenditure will vary subject to the final visit programme, and the airfare and hotel room rates at the time of confirmation.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
4 April 2018