

(Translation)

(Letterhead of Food and Health Bureau)

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3 May 2018

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)

Dear Miss So,

**Suspected Escherichia Coli Contamination of Romaine Lettuce
Produced in the State of Arizona, the United States**

Thank you for relaying Hon Steven HO and Hon CHAN Han-pan's enquiry regarding the suspected Escherichia coli (E. coli) O157:H7 contamination of romaine lettuce produced in the state of Arizona, the United States (US). Our reply is as follows:

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department closely keeps in view and monitors overseas food incidents, and assesses their potential impact on Hong Kong. The CFS noted a notice by the US Food and Drug Administration earlier on related to the investigation of an outbreak of E. coli infections, which was likely linked to the consumption of romaine lettuce suspected to be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7 produced in the State of Arizona.

For the sake of prudence, the CFS announced on 23 April 2018 the immediate suspension of the import into and sale within Hong Kong of romaine lettuce produced in the State of Arizona, and urged the trade to stop using and selling the product concerned immediately should they possess it. The CFS has enhanced the surveillance of romaine lettuce produced in the US at import and retail levels, and will continue to closely monitor the development of the incident in the US. The CFS will take appropriate follow-up actions, where necessary, to safeguard food safety and public health.

The CFS has also enhanced the relevant risk communication and public education work. People can contract *E. coli*, which causes gastro-intestinal diseases, through consumption of contaminated water or undercooked and contaminated foods. Intestinal bleeding and serious complications such as hemolytic uraemic syndrome may also develop for some patients. Moreover, due to poor personal hygiene, person-to-person transmission of this pathogen is possible through the oral-faecal route. Since *E. coli* cannot survive under high temperature, thorough cooking can exterminate the bacteria.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed)
(Kenneth CHAN)
for Secretary for Food and Health

cc: DFEH (Attn: Dr Christine WONG)

(Fax : 2521 9527)