

**Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council
Public Hearing on Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71
10 December 2018**

Centre for Food Safety: Management of Food Safety

Opening Remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health

Chairman,

The Government attaches great importance to food safety. I would like to thank the Audit Commission for conducting a review and providing valuable comments on two areas of work of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS), namely "Management of Food Safety" and "Import Control of Foods". The Audit Reports identified the inadequacies and room for improvement of CFS in certain aspects of work and the handling of individual cases. I generally agree with the findings of the Audit Reports on the areas that CFS should improve. CFS must rectify these inadequacies as soon as possible.

2. I have instructed the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (DFEH) to follow up seriously and proactively the recommendations in the Audit Reports and propose specific measures to improve the daily operation of CFS. The Food and Health Bureau will provide resources support for CFS where necessary to assist it to implement the improvement measures efficiently.

3. In the course of facilitating the Audit Commission in conducting the review, CFS had already noticed that there were inadequacies in some of its work and had immediately taken various remedial actions. For instance, with regard to its work in the management of food safety referred to in Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71, CFS has commenced reviewing the distribution of food samples in the Food Surveillance Programme, and is updating its sampling guidelines to increase the diversity of retail outlets and the types of food from which samples are taken. Also, CFS has completed a review on its operational guidelines for the handling of food complaints, and introduced the

updated guidelines in early October this year to set out the timeframe for its staff to follow up food complaints and the requirements for documenting the follow-up actions taken.

4. Despite its inadequacies in certain work procedures, CFS has been fully committed to safeguarding the food safety of Hong Kong. CFS conducts assessments on food safety risks on an ongoing basis, takes as many as 65 000 food samples for testing each year, and handles food safety incidents promptly.

5. We will urge CFS to implement the improvement measures recommended in the Audit Reports as soon as practicably possible to enhance the effectiveness of its daily operation, with a view to strengthening public confidence in the food safety mechanism as well as CFS' work to safeguard food safety.

6. I would like to invite DFEH to respond to the key recommendations in the Audit Report on CFS' management of food safety. Thank you, Chairman.

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