



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

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6 December 2018

Mr Anthony CHU
Clerk to Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax: 2543 9197)

Dear Mr Chu,

LegCo Public Accounts Committee
Consideration of Chapter 1 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71
Centre for Food Safety: Management of Food Safety

I refer to your letter dated 30 November 2018, requesting this Bureau to provide supplementary information on Chapter 1 "Centre for Food Safety: Management of Food Safety" of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71. Having consulted with the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Department of Food and Environmental Hygiene, the relevant information is set out as follows –

- (a) The establishment and strength of civil servants and the number of contract staff under each division/section of CFS, and the breakdown of the food control offices located at the air, road and sea control points are at Appendix I;
- (b) The Expert Committee on Food Safety (the Expert Committee), which is a non-statutory advisory body, advises the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene on matters relating to food safety

as set out in its terms of reference at Appendix II. The current term of the Expert Committee comprises 18 non-official members, of which four are from outside Hong Kong. The membership and background of the non-official members of the Expert Committee is at Appendix III.

The appointment of non-official members to the Expert Committee follows the Government's guidelines on appointing members to advisory and statutory bodies. Specifically, appointment is made taking into account factors such as the candidate's ability, expertise, experience, integrity and commitment to public service and with due regard to the functions and nature of the Expert Committee. To gauge a wide range of views, we have enlisted people of different background and experience, such as professionals on food safety related areas, academics, representatives from the trade and an organisation representing consumers' interest etc., to the Expert Committee.

- (c) The tender document for the second population-based food consumption survey is provided at Appendix IV. A total of two tender offers were received from local service providers during the tendering period. Regarding the basis of tender evaluation, please refer to paragraph 5 of the "Terms of Tender (Supplement)" in the tender document.

According to the provisions in the signed contract, if the Contractor fails to meet the contract requirements, the Government shall be entitled to terminate the contract by giving a written notice to the Contractor. With regard to the inadequacies identified in paragraph 2.5 of the Audit report, the targeted measures taken or to be taken by CFS are as follows –

- A steering committee (the SC), chaired by the Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication), was established within CFS in May 2017. The SC conducts regular meetings on a monthly basis with the Contractor to give advice on the progress of survey and any issues encountered by the Contractor. Additional meetings with the Contractor may also be arranged by CFS for timely intervention of the Contractor's performance and progress as and when necessary.

***Note by Clerk, PAC: Appendix IV not attached.**

- Apart from the provisions in the signed contract, CFS has instituted additional monitoring and control measures, including requiring the Contractor to provide weekly report for review of the fieldwork progress, formulating additional statistical indicators for close monitoring of the Contractor's performance, giving guidance to the Contractor via telephone and email to target at specific areas of improvement and requiring the Contractor to take immediate follow-up actions.
- As of November 2018, CFS has issued three letters, including one warning letter, to the Contractor to demand the latter to expedite the fieldwork of the survey and address its manpower issues for rectifying the situation.
- The SC has been in close liaison with the Contractor to explore how to expedite the progress. A new measure to modify the mode of interview has been proposed by the Contractor and put into trial in late October 2018. Initial findings are that the new measure should be feasible, and that some improvement in the fieldwork progress was noted. Currently, the Contractor is working to roll out the new measure in a larger scale. The SC will closely monitor the effectiveness of the new measure.

The latest progress of the survey as of late November 2018 is as follows –

- According to the weekly report of the fieldwork progress submitted by the Contractor (Week 32), the number of completed cases was 777 (i.e. 26% of the required number of completed cases) and the total number of man-hour of interviewers was 3 861 (i.e. 57% of the required hours). The preliminary response rate was 45%.
 - Comparing with Week 15 as described in the Audit report, some improvement have been noted in the fieldwork progress, the number of man-hour provided and the preliminary response rate. As the survey is still in progress, CFS will continue to closely monitor the Contractor's performance and the survey progress.
- (d) CFS regularly reviews and adjusts the sampling programme and the types of laboratory analysis to be conducted, taking into account

factors such as past food surveillance results, food incidents occurred in Hong Kong and other places, and relevant risk analyses. Through the Food Surveillance Programme (FSP), CFS staff take food samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for conducting microbiological (including bacteria and viruses), chemical (including food additives, contaminants, other harmful substances and toxins) and radiation tests to assess food safety risks.

Case 1 under paragraph 3.6 of the Audit report is about testing of pesticide residues in cereal and grain products under the FSP. The FSP conducted by CFS covers all the 360 pesticides regulated under the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulations (Cap. 132CM). The food types identified for testing each of the pesticides and the priorities of testing those pesticide-food pairs are determined based mainly on CFS's risk assessment. As at end August 2018, cereal and grain products were used for testing a total of 151 pesticides under the FSP. For the other 61 pesticides also applicable to cereal and grain products, CFS will continue to adopt a risk-based approach in determining the priorities of testing cereal and grain products against them.

Among the seven potential food hazards without statutory standards as mentioned in Case 2, CFS has included one of them (i.e. di-isodecyl phthalate) in the FSP for testing in the third quarter of 2018. Having considered the comments of the Expert Committee on Food Safety, 3-monochloropropane-1,2-diol (3-MCPD) and Ochratoxin A will be included in the FSP of 2019. CFS will continue to review the need and timetable for including the remaining four substances in the FSP in a risk-based approach.

Regarding Case 3 on the recent findings of veterinary drug residues in honey products in April 2018, CFS has already planned to include honey samples for testing veterinary drug residues in the FSP of 2019.

CFS will continue to review the FSP with reference to the Audit's views and make adjustments to the programme as necessary in a risk-based approach.

- (e) CFS takes samples from different types of fish for testing, taking into account various factors including relevant health risks, and subject to the actual circumstances of food supply in the market.

CFS will continue to review the FSP and make adjustments to the programme as necessary in a risk-based approach.

With reference to Audit's views, CFS will update the sampling guidelines in order to increase the number of retail outlets for taking samples and the types of sample to be collected.

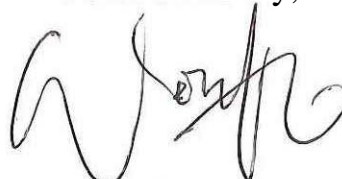
The proportion of 1 973 fish samples collected in 2017 is as follows

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- Marine fish 59%
- Brackish water fish 21%
- Freshwater fish 8%
- Fish products 12%

- (f) Generally speaking, sampling officers should take samples in accordance with the sampling requirements of the FSP and taking into account the actual circumstances of food supply at the retail level. According to the sampling requirements of CFS, sampling officers should not take more than two food samples from the same retail outlet for the same food surveillance project, and the two samples should be of different food items as far as possible. If the two samples belong to the same food item, they should be from different sources or used for different tests.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Chelsea WONG)

for Secretary for Food and Health

c.c.:

Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene	(Fax no. 2524 1977)
Controller, Centre for Food Safety	(Fax no. 2536 9731)
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury	(Fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit	(Fax no. 2583 9063)

Centre for Food Safety

Civil Service Establishment and Strength and Contract Staff

(as at 30 June 2018)

	Civil Servants		Contract Staff
	Establishment	Strength	
Controller, Centre for Food Safety	1	1	-
Risk Management Division ^{Note 1}	575	529	43
Food Import and Export Section	253	233	26
Veterinary Public Health Section	66	59	-
Slaughterhouse (Veterinary) Section	89	75	8
Food Chemistry Section	20	20	7
Food Surveillance and Complaint Section	122	117	-
Risk Management Section	21	21	2
Others	4	4	-
Risk Assessment and Communication Division	95	93	8
Risk Assessment Section	28	28	6
Risk Communication Section	42	40	2
Food Research Laboratory Section	24	24	-
Others	1	1	-
Corporate and System Management Division	11	11	9 ^{Note 2}
Centre Administration Division	28	27	4
Total	710	661	64

Breakdown of food control offices located at air, road and sea control points

	Civil Servants		Contract Staff
	Establishment	Strength	
Air Food Control Office	58	56	-
Sea Food Control Office ^{Note 3}	74	67	19
Land Food Control Offices ^{Note 4}	128	113	-

Note 1: Formerly known as Food Surveillance and Control Division (on and before 30 June 2018).

Note 2: Excluding IT staff under contract centrally administered by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer.

Note 3: Including relevant staff in Hong Kong and Kowloon Office, Radiation Inspection Office and Waterfront Office.

Note 4: Including relevant staff in Frontier Office and Import Inspection Unit under the Veterinary Public Health Section.

Expert Committee on Food Safety

Terms of Reference

To advise the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene on

- existing or new food safety operational strategies and measures to protect public health;
- standards / guidelines relating to food safety and food composition and their suitable adoption in Hong Kong having regard to international practices, trends and developments;
- the strategies for risk communication to promote food safety and how best to implement relevant risk communication or public education programmes; and
- any new directions for any research to be commissioned by the Centre for Food Safety.

Expert Committee on Food Safety

Membership

Chairman

Prof CHEN Zhen-yu

Background

Professor of Food and Nutritional Sciences, School of Life Sciences, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Vice-Chairman

Prof WANG Wen-xiong

Chair Professor of the Department of Ocean Science and Division of Life Science, Director of the Coastal Marine Laboratory, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Members

Prof CAI Zong-wei

Chair Professor of Chemistry, Hong Kong Baptist University and Director of State-key Laboratory of Environmental and Biological Analysis, Director of Dioxin Analysis Laboratory

Ms Kenneth CHAN
Kin-nin

President, Hong Kong Food Council

Dr Olivia CHAN
Sinn-kay

Veterinarian and Research Officer, School of Public Health, the University of Hong Kong

Mr CHENG Kit-man

Ex-Senior Physicist, Department of Health Specialist in radiation

Mr Sunny LEE
Wai-kwong

Vice-President (Administration) of the City University of Hong Kong

Dr Wendy MA Lynn

Senior Programme Director, College of Life Sciences and Technology, School of Professional and Continuing Education, University of Hong Kong

Dr Jennifer WAN
Man-fan

Associate Professor, Food and Nutrition Science, School of Biological Science, University of Hong Kong

Dr Raymond WONG Siu-ming	Consultant, Poison Treatment Centre, Department of Medicine and Therapeutics, Prince of Wales Hospital
Dr Keith KWOK Wing-yin	Principal Research and Survey Officer, Consumer Council
Dr June LEUNG Yue-yan	Clinical Assistant Professor and Master of Public Health Programme Director, School of Public Health, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong
Dr. WONG Ka-hing	Executive Director of Food Safety and Technology Research Centre, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Dr Howard WONG Kai-hay	Director, Professional Development and Communications, Director, Centre for Animal Welfare, City University of Hong Kong
Dr CHEW Siang-thai	Veterinarian and Managing Director, Special Project of Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore
Prof Steve HATHAWAY	Veterinarian and Director, Science and Risk Assessment, New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries
Prof QIAO Xiong-wu	Chairman, Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues
Prof WU Yong-ning	Chief Scientist, China National Centre for Food Safety Risk Assessment of the National Health Commission, and Head, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Food Contamination Monitoring (China)

Ex-officio members

Representative from the Food and Health Bureau

Representative from the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Representative from the Department of Health