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2 January 2019

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,

Legislative Council 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 17 December 2018, requesting this Department to provide supplementary information on Chapter 1 "Centre for Food Safety: Management of Food Safety" of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71. The relevant information is set out in the attached document please.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Chow".

(Christine CHOW)

for Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

c.c.:

Secretary for Food and Health	(Fax no. 2526 3753)
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)

Reply to Public Accounts Committee's Letter dated 17 December

(a)(i)

The tender document of the first Food Consumption Survey (FCS) did not specify the recruitment method. The tenderers were required to provide proposals on the recruitment method and other details on the survey plan upon submission of the tender offer. The appointed Contractor proposed in the tender offer to use random telephone calls to recruit the respondents. At the first meeting of the Advisory Panel on FCS held with the Contractor after the award of contract, the Advisory Panel discussed the draft survey protocol that was submitted by the Contractor, and commented that the limitation of the recruitment method (i.e. through making random telephone calls) proposed by the Contractor might introduce sampling errors and bias, and in turn affect the representativeness of survey data. The Contractor decided to adopt an improved recruitment method, i.e. recruiting respondents during visits to selected households, in view of comments of the Advisory Panel, and revised the survey protocol accordingly. The views of the Advisory Panel on the recruitment method first proposed by the Contractor were raised after the contract was signed with the Contractor but when the survey was still under planning stage and that the fieldwork had not yet commenced.

(a)(ii)

As mentioned in the aforesaid reply to (a)(i), the views of the Advisory Panel on FCS on the recruitment method first proposed by the Contractor were raised after the contract was signed with the Contractor but when the survey was still under planning stage and that the fieldwork had not yet commenced. As the altered recruitment method was not stipulated in the original contract, and such method was more demanding in terms of resources, the Contractor requested the extension of the contract period for 12 months and an increase in contract price. The legal advice obtained by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) considered that change of recruitment method after the award of the contract was amounted to the nature of variation of contract, and the Contractor had good cause for its request. Approval was granted by the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, after considering the justification provided by FEHD, for the contract variation to extend the contract period, alter the recruitment method and increase the contract value.

(b)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) adopted the risk-based approach (e.g. the toxicity level of the pesticides) for selecting 105 (43, 32 and 42 pesticides were tested in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively, some were overlapped) pesticides among 212 regulated pesticides relevant to cereal and grain products for testing in the 2015 to 2017 Food Surveillance Programme (FSP). Up till 31 August 2018, a total of 151 pesticides relevant to cereal and grain products have been tested. The CFS will continue to adopt the risk-based approach in determining the priorities of testing cereal and grain products against the remaining 61 pesticides. It is aimed to complete the testings in two years' time (i.e. before end 2020).

(c)

Action levels are set with reference to international guidelines and practices, such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) standards, standards of other economies, toxicological evaluations conducted by international and national scientific authorities (for example, the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations / World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)), as well as taking into consideration the local situation.

(d) (i)

The CFS adopts the risk-based approach and considers various factors including the past food surveillance results, local and overseas food incidents, community concerns and relevant food risk assessments in determining the types of food samples to be collected, the frequency of tests, the number of samples and the laboratory analysis planned to be undertaken.

(d)(ii)

The CFS's operational manual on food sampling (September 2018 version) is enclosed at **Annex A** (only English is available). Apart from this manual, the CFS has compiled a supplementary guideline in October 2018 (**Annex B**) (only English is available). The operational manual and guideline are internal documents concerning the enforcement details of the Department, which are not suitable for public disclosure, or else the enforcement work may be affected in the future.

***Note by Clerk, PAC: Annexes A and B not attached.**

(d)(iii)

Before implementation of the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation, there were a number of food poisoning incidents caused by high levels of pesticides in vegetables. Therefore, the community expressed great concern at that time about the levels of pesticide residues in vegetables. After the implementation of the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation with effect from August 2014, we needed to collect baseline data to assess the compliance rate of the residual pesticides levels of vegetables and fruits in local markets. Hence, more vegetables and fruits samples were allocated under the FSP in the past few years. Through the collection of more samples for a more comprehensive assessment, we hope that public concern on the residual levels of pesticides in vegetables and fruits in local markets can be removed. Based on the experiences gained in running the FSP in the past few years, and as the baseline data for the majority of vegetables and fruits has largely been collected following the implementation of the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation with effect from August 2014 and the results of which were satisfactory, the CFS has already started to reallocate resources to testing other foods and food hazards.

(e)(i) and (e)(ii)

The CFS makes reference to the total retail sales of food and beverages in supermarkets/department stores and other retail outlets provided by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), and considers other risk factors, in order to set the sampling ratios for “supermarkets, convenience stores and department stores” and “other retail outlets”. The proportion of samples taken by the CFS in supermarkets in 2017 was about 50%, which was broadly in line with the information provided by C&SD.

The CFS has continuously reviewed and adjusted the FSP. With effect from the first quarter of 2018, a food sampling ratio of 40:60 has been set for “supermarkets, convenience stores and department stores” and “other retail outlets”. The proportion of samples for individual food surveillance projects in “supermarkets, convenience stores and department stores” and “other retail outlets” will be adjusted having regard to the usual point of sale of that food item. In addition, the CFS has, in response to the contents of the Audit report, appropriately increased the proportion of samples taken from markets and will adjust the sampling ratio at the retail level in view of local market conditions (Please see reply to (h) in following paragraphs).

(e) (iii)

In implementing the FSP, the CFS officers take food samples for chemical or other tests under the powers conferred by Section 62 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Chapter 132). The routine surveillance samples are generally taken in the form of ordinary purchases. If unsatisfactory conditions are found in the routine surveillance samples, the CFS will follow up, including the announcement of test results, and the taking of enforcement samples from the same location for prosecution purpose.

The Training Section of FEHD regularly provides the Health Inspectors with training related to the knowledge of food safety. At present, FEHD provides induction training to all newly recruited Health Inspectors. Among others, training on food safety control is covered. In addition, refresher courses, experience sharing sessions, seminars and workshops will be organized from time to time for them to reinforce their knowledge and skills and to share experience.

The CFS has adopted a new measure requiring the Senior Health Inspectors of the Food Surveillance Unit to brief the Health Inspectors newly posted to the CFS on the operational guidelines, the issues to note and all relevant circulars. The CFS has also introduced new monitoring and supervisory meetings, enhanced communication with and supervision of the frontline staff, examined information in the Food Surveillance System and ensured that relevant colleagues comply with the various food sampling requirements set out in the FSP. In addition, the Chief Health Inspectors will host refreshment courses every six months to explain the relevant sampling procedures to the Health Inspectors.

As a new measure, the Chief Health Inspectors will conduct accompanied visits with the Health Inspectors every two months. The accompanied visits by the Senior Health Inspectors with the Health Inspectors will be increased from every two months in the past to once every month, in order to enhance the knowledge of the Health Inspectors and the supervision on the standard of sampling work.

(e) (iv)

According to record of the CFS, the most expensive and the cheapest samples are respectively tea and flour, the values of which are respectively HK\$10,113 and HK\$2.8.

(f) (i)

To ensure food safety, the CFS takes food samples for testing at the import, wholesale and retail levels. Whether the CFS is able to take planned samples of intended fish types at the import level depends on the species and quantities of the import consignments available at the time of taking samples. The CFS understands that the types of fish samples should be diversified as far as possible (As a matter of fact, the fish samples taken in 2017, other than those fishes the names of which are listed under Case 5, account for 77 % of the total number of fish samples taken in the year), and be taken at different levels as far as practicable. When encountering difficulties in taking samples of specific fish types at the import level, more samples for these fishes should be taken at the wholesale or retail levels.

As the ratios of taking samples of yellowtail and salmon were on the high side in 2017, the CFS will reduce the sampling proportion of these two fish types under the coming FSP, and at the same time increase the sampling ratio of other fishes, especially for those fishes frequently consumed by the public.

(f) (ii)

A total of 23 fish enforcement samples were taken by the CFS in 2017 from various wholesale fish markets. All test results were satisfactory. Information is set out as follows:

Serial No.	Sampling date	Sampling time	Wholesale Market	Food item	Testing parameter	Result
1	11/1/2017	Midnight	Cheung San Wan Wholesale Food Market	Japanese eel	Malachite Green	Satisfactory
2	17/1/2017			Japanese eel		
3	18/1/2017			Japanese eel		
4	19/1/2017			Japanese eel		
5	20/1/2017			Japanese eel		
6	19/4/2017			Freshwater grouper		
7	6/5/2017			Japanese eel		
8	8/5/2017			Japanese eel		
9	9/5/2017			Japanese eel		
10	10/5/2017			Japanese eel		
11	11/5/2017			Japanese eel		
12	12/5/2017			Japanese eel		
13	5/6/2017			Freshwater grouper		
14	17/7/2017			Japanese eel		
15	18/7/2017			Japanese eel		
16	19/7/2017			Japanese eel		
17	20/7/2017			Japanese eel		
18	21/7/2017			Japanese eel		
19	22/7/2017			Japanese eel		
20	29/12/2017			Red tilapia		
21	30/12/2017			Red tilapia		
22	31/12/2017			Red tilapia		
23	14/12/2017	Morning	Aberdeen Wholesale Fish Market	Sabah Giant Grouper	Nitrofurans	Satisfactory

In view of the unique business mode of the wholesale fish markets (for example, stalls generally only sell fish to the industry or buyers registered with the Fish Marketing Organization (FMO)), the CFS staff are not able to enter the fish market as ordinary people to purchase the samples. The CFS will later liaise with the FMO and explore possible ways to collect fish samples from the wholesale fish markets for routine food surveillance.

(g)

In 2017, the CFS staff took food samples via 75 channels/websites for microbiological testing. At present, a total of 26 Health Inspectors from the Food Surveillance Unit of the CFS take online food samples for testing, accounting for 16% of the average number of samples taken per person per year. The types of the 3,868 food samples taken online are tabulated as follows:

Types of Food	Sub-total
Vegetables, fruits and products	1,281
Cereal, grains and products	765
Aquatic products	421
Meat, poultry and products	391
Milk, milk products and frozen confections	87
Others	923
Total	3,868

The CFS conducts regular online search for specific foods for testing, and makes reference to internal information, the list of licensed/permitted premises and other intelligence to order foods online for routine food surveillance. Besides, in view of food incidents, the CFS will order follow-up samples of relevant foods online for testing.

(h)

The operational guidelines on sampling ratio at the retail level issued to the CFS staff (October 2018 version) is enclosed at **Annex C**. The guidelines are internal documents concerning the enforcement details of the Department, which are not suitable for public disclosure, or else the enforcement work may be affected in the future.

Taking into account comments in the Audit Report, and factors including risk assessment and risk management, the CFS has set the sampling ratio for markets at 15%. The CFS will adopt the risk-based principle and, from time to time, review the ratio for taking food samples from different retail selling points.

(i)

Please see above reply in (e)(iii).

(j)

The testing work of food samples taken under the FSP are mainly performed by the Government Laboratory (GL), the Public Health Laboratory Centre under the Department of Health, the Man Kam To Food Laboratory and the Fu Hing Street Laboratory under the CFS. The relevant testing work includes chemical, microbiological and radiation testings. In addition, the CFS and the GL have respectively outsourced the testing work for some surveillance samples taken under the FSP to an overseas private laboratory and several local private laboratories. (The CFS has outsourced some testing

***Note by Clerk, PAC:** *Annex C not attached.*

work to overseas private laboratory because no local private laboratories provide relevant services).

The CFS has been working and communicating closely with the above-said laboratories in order to cope with the testing demands under different circumstances. Under special circumstances such as food incidents, the laboratories concerned have always deployed their resources flexibly to meet the service needs of the CFS.

(k)

The turnaround time for sample testing refers to the period of time from the collection of food samples to the return of the test results by the laboratory.

The turnaround time for sample testing of six follow-up projects in 2017 is as follows, of which 84% of the tests are processed within 10 days or less:

Turnaround time (days)	Number of Test Results			Number of test results
	Investigation of Food Incidents	Investigation of Food Complaints	Follow-up of unsatisfactory test results of surveillance projects	
0-5	1,345 (36.2%)	7,634 (50.2%)	299 (33.7%)	9,278 (46.8%)
6-10	1,432 (38.5%)	5,666 (37.3%)	297 (33.4%)	7,395 (37.3%)
11-30	863 (23.2%)	1,139 (7.5%)	276 (31.1%)	2,278 (11.5%)
31-60	35 (0.9%)	628 (4.1%)	7 (0.8%)	670 (3.4%)
61-90	36 (1.0%)	141 (0.9%)	9 (1.0%)	186 (0.9%)
>91	8 (0.2%)	2 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (0.1%)
Total	3,719 (100.0%)	15,210 (100.0%)	888 (100.0%)	19,817 (100.0%)

(Note: The six follow-up projects in 2017 have taken 6,656 food samples for different tests. Some samples have been used for more than one tests and the total number of test results were 19,817.)

(l)

The follow-up projects and the number of samples taken under the FSP from 2014 to 2016 are as follows:

Follow-up Projects	2014		2015		2016	
	No. of Project	No. of Food samples collected	No. of Project	No. of Food samples collected	No. of Project	No. of Food samples collected
Investigation of food incidents	2	259	2	2,179	2	1,471
Investigation of food complaints	3	3,288	2	3,540	2	3,404
Follow-up of unsatisfactory testing results of surveillance projects	1	296	2	635	2	649
Total	6	3,843	6	6,354	6	5,524

(m)(i)

As at 30 June 2018, the strength of civil service staff responsible for food surveillance in the CFS is 280, and the strength of contract staff is 19.

(m) (ii)

The food sampling duty is mainly taken up by the Health Inspectors. Before their posting to the CFS, they must obtain a professional diploma relevant to meat and foods inspection.

(m) (iii)

Please see above reply in (e)(iii).

(n)

According to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), food products for sale in Hong Kong must be fit for human consumption. Various standards have been stipulated under its subsidiary legislations.

In situations where there is no specific standard for certain substances in the legislation, if necessary, the CFS will make reference to the international guidelines and practice such as the relevant standards established by the

Codex Alimentarius Commission, standards adopted in other economies, toxicological assessment evaluated by international agencies such as the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JEFCA), and take into account the local situation, for setting action levels for some hazards to facilitate risk management actions by the CFS. In addition, the CFS will also conduct risk assessment to determine whether the levels of the substances in foods would pose any risk to human health.

(o)

The CFS is the designated contact point for the International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Through INFOSAN, the CFS directly receives information on emergent food safety incidents issued by food safety authorities from 188 Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, the CFS regularly monitors the Chinese and English websites of food safety authorities of other economies, including the United States, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Singapore, the Mainland, Taiwan and Macau, through its Food Incidents Surveillance System (FISS) in order to further collect food incident information and intelligence relevant to these economies.

INFOSAN, managed jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO, is a rapid food safety information sharing global network comprising food safety authorities from 188 WHO Member States (including most Southeast Asia economies). Members of INFOSAN have to inform the INFOSAN secretariat about food safety related incidents and emergencies of international significance. INFOSAN will assist in disseminating information and data to all concerned economies, ensuring rapid sharing of information during food safety emergencies to stop the spread of contaminated food from one country to another.

(p)

Risk management actions with respect to food incidents : The CFS conducts initial assessment for every food incident identified through the FISS, and depending on the assessment outcome (for example, the nature and severity of the incident and the food hazard involved), take single or multiple necessary risk management actions (including contacting responsible authorities for further information collection, contacting local trade and checking local sales, issuing food incident post, issuing press release, issuing trade alert and conducting food recall exercise). The CFS will, from time to

time, adjust the follow-up measures with regard to the development of the incident and the investigation findings. The factor(s) to be considered by the CFS when determining the different risk management measures to be adopted are set out in the following table:

Risk management action(s)	Factor(s) to be considered
Contact responsible authorities for further information collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The CFS wants to gather further information on the food incident from the responsible authority, such as whether the affected product has been exported to Hong Kong.
Contact local trade and checking local sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The CFS wants to know whether the affected product is available in the local market.
Issue food incident post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Upon investigation and assessment of the incident by the CFS, and on the basis of currently available information, it is noted that the affected product is not locally available. Yet, the possibility cannot be excluded that individuals may be in possession of the affected product through travel or other personal reasons. The CFS reminds the public through food incident post.
Issue press release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In case investigation reveals local availability of the affected product, and has adverse health impact on the public and/or non-compliance with Hong Kong's legal requirements, the CFS will inform the public about the incident and the relevant arrangements (for example, to urge the public not to consume the affected product, suspend the import into and sale in Hong Kong of the affected product, and recall, etc.) by issuing press release. ● The CFS will also update the press release in view of latest developments and follow-up arrangements.
Issue trade alert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In case investigation reveals local availability of the affected product, and has adverse health impact on the public and/or non-compliance with Hong Kong's legal requirements, the CFS will issue quick trade alerts to instruct/advise the registered traders to take corresponding

Risk management action(s)	Factor(s) to be considered
	measures in response to the affected product. The objective is to facilitate the trade to take timely appropriate actions such as stop selling/recall in order to minimize the health impact on the public.
Conduct food recall exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food recall means to recall a food product which may pose a safety hazard to consumers from market, distribution location and consumers. ● The CFS will make announcement on food recall exercise when it considers it necessary to remind the public that a food product will endanger health.

The following table lists out some examples of food incidents and relevant risk management actions for reference:

Food incident (example)	Risk management action(s)						
	Contact authorities for further information	Contact local trade and examine local sales situation	Investigation on revealed local availability	Issue food incident post	Issue press release	Issue trade alert	Conduct food recall exercise
Recall of a brand of chocolate block in Australia due to undeclared allergens (Almond and wheat/gluten)	✓	✓		✓			
Recall of a brand of dates in Japan due to contamination by aflatoxins	✓	✓		✓			

Food incident (example)	Risk management action(s)						
	Contact authorities for further information	Contact local trade and examine local sales situation	Investigation on revealed local availability	Issue food incident post	Issue press release	Issue trade alert	Conduct food recall exercise
Recall of a brand of cookie & cream biscuits in the UK due to undeclared allergen (milk).	✓	✓		✓			
Poultry eggs from European Union contaminated with excessive fipronil	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(q)

As far as Case 7 is concerned, the main reason for the presence of colouring matters (Sudan red) in the dried Chinese white cabbage is that the concerned stall operator inappropriately tied up the dried Chinese white cabbage with red nylon rope stained with Sudan red.

After receiving the unsatisfactory test result of the dried Chinese white cabbage sample, the CFS has immediately visited the market stall in question, but sale of dry cabbage was not found. The CFS staff informed the vendor of the irregularities and instructed him to suspend the sale of the affected product.

In 2017, the CFS took 15 dried white Chinese cabbage samples for testing of colouring matters. With the exception of two dried Chinese white cabbage samples which were found to contain unpermitted colouring matters, all test results were satisfactory. Generally speaking, before consuming the dried Chinese white cabbage, members of the public will rinse it thoroughly under clean running water. The foreign substances (including colouring matters) from the surface of dried Chinese white cabbage can be removed during the cleaning process. No dried Chinese white cabbage was found for sale by the concerned vendor during the follow-up visit by the CFS staff in December 2018.

(r)(i) to (iv)

The CFS has reviewed the case and found room for improvement in the process of handling food complaints. The CFS has implemented improvement measures. The following is a summary of the sequence of events in handling the case:

	Date	Event
1.	18 August 2016	The concerned district environmental hygiene office (the district) received the complaint. The district staff contacted the complainant on the same day. The complainant complained that she purchased mud crab from the incriminated market stall on 12.8.2016, and that after consumption, symptoms of discomfort and irritation of her throat appeared. The complainant did not seek medical treatment of the discomfort and the symptoms. The district staff conducted a hygiene inspection to the incriminated market stall on the same day and found that its hygienic condition was satisfactory. The district staff contacted the complainant on the same day and informed her of the findings. The district referred the case to the CFS for follow-up on the same day.
2.	29 August 2016	The CFS contacted the complainant. The case was allotted to an investigating officer for action.
3.	27 September 2016	The investigating officer studied the case background and recommended to put up the case to the Food Complaint Risk Analysis Panel (Panel) for directive and expert advice.
4.	28 September 2016	The investigating officer contacted the complainant and further enquired her about the case details (including the method and time of cooking, the time of consumption and on-set of symptoms and the 48 hours' food history) for investigation purpose.
5.	29 September 2016	The Panel discussed the case and suspected that the mud crab contained veterinary drug, namely, Chloramphenicol. The Panel advised to take a surveillance sample of the mud crab from the market stall for analysis of Chloramphenicol. The Panel advised the investigating officer to convey the Panel's advice and the way forward (including the testing parameter) to the complainant before proceeding to the incriminated stall to take sample and deliver the sample for testing purpose.

	Date	Event
6.	5 October 2016	The investigating officer attempted to contact the complainant, but in vain. The Panel's advice and the way forward could not be conveyed to the complainant.
7.	29 November 2016	The investigating officer conducted an inspection to the incriminated market stall. Sale of mud crab was not detected.
8.	15 December 2016	The investigating officer successfully contacted the complainant, conveyed the Panel's advice and the way forward (including the testing parameter) to her. The investigating officer successfully procured a surveillance sample of the mud crab from the incriminated market stall and sent the sample to the Government Laboratory (GL) for analysis of Chloramphenicol.
9.	28 December 2016	The GL completed analysis of the mud crab on Chloramphenicol, and issued a laboratory report.
10.	30 December 2016	The CFS received the laboratory report. The results indicated that the surveillance sample contained prohibited veterinary drug namely, Chloramphenicol.
11.	9 February 2017	The Panel assessed the result and concluded the case. The Panel took the view that mud crab should be classified under the food type of "Shellfish". According to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF), fish (including shellfish) sold in Hong Kong for human consumption was not permitted to contain Chloramphenicol. The test result was considered unsatisfactory. The Panel suggested a list of follow-up actions on the case for the investigating officer, including (i) to procure a follow-up enforcement sample of mud crab from the incriminated market stall and conduct source tracing; and (ii) to report progress of the procurement of enforcement sample, in order to arrange publication of the unsatisfactory test result of the surveillance sample upon taking enforcement sample.
12.	10 February 2017	The investigating officer successfully procured an enforcement sample of the mud crab from the incriminated market stall and sent the sample to the GL for testing on Chloramphenicol. The CFS publicised the unsatisfactory test result of the surveillance sample.
13.	14 February 2017	The test result of the enforcement sample was satisfactory.

The CFS has implemented the following improvement measures:

	Room for improvement	Improvement measures
1.	The CFS reviewed the case and found that during the course of investigation, the staff of the Food Complaint Unit (FCU) failed to make full efforts to contact the complainant and to conduct sampling work of the incriminated food.	<p>The CFS has advised the concerned staff on the necessity to follow up the food complaint cases timely and properly.</p> <p>The CFS has stepped up monitoring of the progress of investigation of all food complaint cases.</p>
2.	Fail to recognize the incriminated mud crab is a seasonal food and the market supply is time-limited, and therefore warrant accordance of priority to handle the case.	<p>The CFS has revised the relevant guidelines in May 2018 to specify that in taking follow-up actions, the investigating officer must obtain the enforcement sample right away in case the incriminated food is a seasonal food or is of a specified food category.</p> <p>The CFS will closely monitor the time taken between taking food samples and publicising the unsatisfactory testing results of the samples, and take necessary measures to minimize the time taken. In general, upon confirmation of the unsatisfactory results, a public announcement would be made promptly, usually within 24 hours and there is no need to wait for successful collection of the enforcement sample.</p>
3.	Fail to (when the complainant cannot be contacted) report to the supervisor/the Panel and seek directive on the follow-up actions.	<p>Through regular briefings, the CFS explains to staff the requirements on handling food complaint cases and taking follow-up samples in accordance with the relevant guidelines.</p> <p>The CFS has introduced regular case studies to improve communication amongst staff.</p>
4.	Fail to bring up the case to the Panel for discussion on time.	<p>The CFS has advised the concerned staff on the necessity to follow up the food complaint cases timely and properly.</p> <p>The CFS has stepped up monitoring of the timely submission of cases to the Panel for assessment.</p>

(r) (v)

In July 2015, the CFS established a Food Complaint Risk Analysis Panel (Panel), with an aim to providing professional support to the CFS's FCU, in order to enhance the efficiency of the investigation work. The Panel is led by a directorate officer and comprises members from the grades of Medical Officers, Chemists, Health Inspectors and Scientific Officers, and will solicit advice from experts from both inside and outside the CFS as necessary.

If the CFS's FCU and the district Health Inspectors consider it necessary to seek the professional advice from the Panel (for example, the applicability of the analysis items and testing standards of the incriminated foods), they can consult the Panel.

The Panel examines referred cases on more or less every working day. Upon receipt of referrals, the Panel will normally discuss and offer advice on the cases on the same day. Depending on complexity of the cases, the discussion of cases normally completes within around half an hour.

(s)

Details of the 23 food recall exercises mentioned in Table 9 of the Audit Report are at **Annex D**. The CFS has implemented the following measures to improve the effectiveness of the food recall exercise:

- (1) Proactively monitor the entire food recall exercise carried out by the food traders, and request the food traders to submit regular progress reports;
- (2) Has formulated and implemented the "Food recall progress reports" to facilitate the food traders to provide relevant information for timely monitoring of the progress of recall;
- (3) Strengthen communication with the food traders to ensure compliance with the food recall guidelines when carrying out recall exercise; and
- (4) Assign the Senior Superintendents to monitor the whole process of

food recall exercise in order to ensure complete accomplishment of the exercise.

In addition, the CFS is updating the food recall guidelines in the website of the CFS to facilitate the food traders to carry out the recall exercise effectively and unambiguously. We expect the update of the guidelines will be completed in the first quarter of 2019.

(t)

In 2017, there were a total of 37 food recall exercises. There were 14 food recall exercises other than the 23 food recall exercises mentioned in Table 9 of the Audit Report. The main reasons were unsatisfactory food samples detected from the regular surveillance system; investigation results of the food poisoning and complaint cases and notification by overseas authorities. For details, please refer to **Annex E**.

(u)

Food recall refers to actions taken from markets, distribution locations and consumers to retrieve food that has been affected. When the CFS considers it necessary to remind the public that certain foods may pose health hazard, it will announce the recall of the concerned food.

The general food recall will be carried out by the Health Inspector grade officers taking into account the specific circumstances of the incidents and with approval by a directorate officer.

Moreover, the Food Safety Ordinance (Cap. 612) empowers the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene to make food safety orders prohibiting the import and supply of problem food and ordering the recall of such food.

— END —

Food Recall Exercises in 2017 mentioned in Table 9

(23 Cases)

Case 1

The CFS received notification from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed of the European Commission on 4.1.2017 that a batch of anchovy paste manufactured in Italy was suspected to contain histamine at a level which did not comply with standard of Italy and the affected batch was being recalled. Upon notification, the CFS followed up with the concerned importer and found that a total of 25 cartons of the affected product were imported and distributed to 13 local retailers. The CFS issued press release on the same day and instructed the concerned importer to recall the affected products. As the affected product were imported more than 9 months before the recall notification, the products were probably used up by consumers no product was successfully recalled.

Case 2

The CFS received a notification on 10.1.2017 from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission that raw oysters harvested in a French location were found to be contaminated with norovirus. The French authority concerned had therefore interdicted harvest and distribution of the affected products from the area from January 5 and a recall of the affected products harvested from December 20, 2016 to January 5, 2017 was underway. According to the information from RASFF, two importers had imported the incriminated oysters. The CFS immediately contacted the two importers concerned for follow up action. The CFS announced in press release on the same day that the import and sale of raw oysters harvested from the affected harvesting areas were prohibited and also informed the French authority of the import ban and notify the local trades accordingly. The total affected oysters were 82 kilograms (kg). Since oysters are highly perishable in nature with short shelf-life, the affected oysters had been used up in partial or disposed of upon receipt of the notification. The quantity of oysters recalled was 11 kg and the recall percentage was 13%.

Case 3

The CFS received a notification on 13.1.2017 from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission that raw oysters harvested in an Irish location and produced by the producer concerned were found to be contaminated with norovirus, and the producer was recalling the affected product. Based on the information provided by the RASFF, some of the affected raw oysters had been imported into Hong Kong by four local importers. The CFS immediately contacted the four importers concerned for follow-up and instructed the importers concerned to cease sale of the affected product and to initiate a recall on the same day. Meanwhile, the CFS announced in press release that the import into and sale within Hong Kong of all raw oysters produced by the producer or harvested in the area concerned had been suspended and also notified the local trade to stop sale or use the affected products if possessed. The quantity of the affected products was 2,192.8 kilograms (kg). Since oysters were highly perishable in nature with short shelf-life and had been partly used up or disposed of upon receipt of the notification, there were 847.58 kg of oysters recalled. The recall percentage was 39%.

Case 4

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 26.1.2017, learned that a British manufacturer of prepackaged minestrone soup had initiated a recall of a batch of product as it might contain pieces of plastic. Upon learning the incident, the CFS immediately followed up with major local importers and confirmed with the importer concerned that it had imported the affected product, which were only for sale in its chain of supermarkets. The CFS instructed the importer concerned on the same day to stop sale and remove from shelves the remaining affected product and initiated a recall. Meanwhile, the CFS announced in press release and notified local trade to conduct relevant follow up measures. The total quantity of affected products was 60 cups. Since the affected products were small in quantity which might had been used up or disposed of at time of the notification, 13 cups were recalled and the recall percentage was 22%.

Case 5

The CFS received a notification on 27.1.2017 from the concerned French authority that a batch of pork rillettes manufactured by a French manufacturer was suspected to be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* and the manufacturer concerned initiated a recall of the affected product. According to information provided by the concerned French authority, a local importer had imported the affected product into Hong Kong. The CFS immediately followed up with the importer concerned and urged the importer to initiate a recall. The CFS announced in press release on the same day to advise consumers who have bought the affected product not to consume it and the trade should stop using or selling the product concerned immediately. The total quantity of affected product was 2.37 kilograms. Since the small volume of imported products might have been used up or voluntarily disposed by the consumers upon receipt of the notification, no product was recalled.

Case 6

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 4.3.2017, learned that the UK Food Standards Agency and Food Safety Authority of Ireland had issued notices that a food trader had initiated a recall of prepackaged frozen Spaghetti Bolognese product, because the product contained egg, a food allergen, but the ingredient was not declared on the product's food label. Upon learning the notifications, the CFS contacted local major importers and found that a total of 161 boxes of the affected product were imported by batches in January and February 2017 and were for sale at the importer's own retail shops. The importer had stopped sale the remaining stock, removed from shelves the affected product and initiated a recall. A total of 123 boxes were recalled and the recall percentage was 76%. The CFS issued press release on 7.3.2017.

Case 7

The CFS received a notification from the New Zealand authority on 10.3.2017 that several kinds of prepackaged salad products produced by a New Zealand manufacturer might be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* and the manufacturer recalled the affected products. According to the information provided by the New Zealand authority, there were seven kinds of affected products imported to Hong Kong by an importer.

Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately followed up with the importer. The importer confirmed that about 252 boxes of the affected products were imported into Hong Kong and were only supplied to a supermarket for sale. The supermarket had already stopped sale and removed from shelves the affected products. Also the importer initiated a recall. Eventually, the importer recalled 116 boxes. The recall percentage was 46% as the affected products were ready-to-eat food and shelf life of them was short. The CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on the same day.

Case 8

The CFS noted from the media's report on 21.3.2017 about problem in the quality of the meat exported from Brazil. The CFS immediately contacted the Brazilian authority and for the sake of prudence took precautionary measures to temporarily suspend the importation of frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat on the same day. The CFS notified the Brazilian authority and the trade of the import ban. According to the information provided by the Brazilian authority on 22.3.2017, among the 21 plants under investigation, 5 plants had exportation of meat and poultry to Hong Kong. Furthermore, 4 out of the 5 plants were suspected to be involved in fraudulent activity and under investigation by the Brazilian authorities. There was no evidence that the products from these plants had food safety or quality problems.

Subsequent to notification from the Brazilian authority on 24.3.2017 about imposition of export ban to the 21 plants which were under investigation, the CFS ordered a recall of all the frozen and chilled meat and poultry meat imported from the 21 plants in question as a precautionary measure on the same day. The quantity of Brazilian meat and poultry meat involved in the incident

were 92,337 kg. A total of 89,217kg of meat and poultry meat were recalled and the recall percentage was 97%. The CFS issued press release on 21.3.2017, 24.3.2017 and 28.3.2017 respectively.

Case 9

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 25.3.2017, learned that the UK Food Standards Agency and Food Safety Authority of Ireland issued notices that a food trader had initiated a recall of a batch of prepackaged vegetable soup manufactured in UK because the product might be tainted with chemical contamination. Upon notification, the CFS immediately followed up with the concerned importer and found that a total of 18 boxes of the affected product were imported which were only for sale at importer's own retail shops. The importer had stopped sale and off-shelf the affected product and initiated a recall. All the affected product was recalled and the recall percentage was 100%. The CFS issued press release on the same day.

Case 10

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 5.4.2017, learned that the Food Standards Australia New Zealand issued a notice about recall of 3 kinds of prepackaged baby biscuits imported from UK due to potential choking hazard. Upon notification, the CFS immediately followed up with local major importers and retailers. An importer had imported 173 boxes (each 5 packs) a total of 865 packs of the affected products from October 2016 to February 2017 and distributed to two retailers. For prudence sake, the retailers had stopped sale and removed from shelves the affected products and the importer had also initiated a recall. A total of 191 packs of the affected product were recalled from the retailers and the recall percentage was 22%. As the affected products were distributed for sale in local market for quite some time, certain quantity of the products was unable to be recalled. The CFS issued press release on 7.4.2017.

Case 11

The CFS received a notification on 2.6.2017 from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission that a kind of cheese with truffle manufactured in the Netherlands was suspected to have been contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* and the affected product was being recalled. According to the information provided by the RASFF, a small volume of the affected product had been imported into Hong Kong by an importer. Upon learning of the incident, the CFS has immediately contacted the importer concerned and instructed the importer and the retailers concerned on the same day to remove from shelves and stop sale of the affected product and initiated recall. Meanwhile, the CFS announced in press release on 2.6.2017 to urge consumers not to consume the affected product. The trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately if they possess it. The quantity of the affected product was about 84 kilogram (Kg) and 70.12 kg were recalled. The recall percentage was 83%.

Case 12

The CFS, through its routine Food Incident Surveillance System on 2.6.2017, noted an announcement made by the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore that a food trader recalled a kind of apple and grape fruit juice imported from Japan due to the suspicion of mould found in some of the products. Upon notification, the CFS immediately followed up with the concerned importer and found that a total of 9, 000 packs of the affected product were imported for sale at its own retail outlets. The importer had already stopped sale and removed from shelves the affected product and initiated a recall. A total of 6,459 packs of the affected product were recalled and the recall percentage was 72%. The CFS issued press release on the same day.

Case 13

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 8.6.2017, learned that the Food Safety Centre, Macau issued a notice that a batch of bottled watercress honey manufactured in Macau was detected to contain benzoic acid at a level exceeding the legal limit of Macau. Upon learning the notification, the CFS immediately clarified with the Macau authority whether the affected product had been imported into Hong Kong. The Macau authority informed the CFS on 9.6.2017 that one local importer had imported the affected product. The CFS followed up with the concerned importer and found that a total of 144 bottles were imported. The affected product had been distributed to the importer's retail outlets and all the products were sold out. The CFS issued a press release on 12.6.2017 and instructed the importer to recall the affected product. As the affected products were for sale at retail outlets for nearly 3 months, therefore, none of the products was successfully recalled.

Case 14

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 16.6.2017, noted a notice issued by the Food and Drug Administration of the United States about the recall of five kinds of protein bar as the products might be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*.

The CFS immediately contacted major local retailers for follow up. Preliminary investigation by the CFS found that a shop imported and sold three kinds of the affected bars. The CFS contacted the shop concerned which already stopped sale, removed from shelves and recalled the affected batch of the products. The shop imported 1,948 pieces of affected products and distributed to its own retail shops. 7 pieces of the affected products were sold. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on the same day. A total of 1,941 pieces of affected products were recalled. The recall percentage was 99.6%.

Case 15

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 15.7.2017, learned that the UK Food Standards Agency and Food Safety Authority of Ireland issued notices that four kinds of prepackaged haggis and black pudding products with different use by dates imported from the United Kingdom were being recalled by manufacturer. This was because there was a production fault that may lead to microbiological contamination. Upon learning of the incident, the CFS immediately followed up with the importer concerned and instructed the importer concerned on the same day to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batches of products and to initiate a recall. Meanwhile, the CFS announced in press release to urge members of the public to stop consuming the affected batches of products if they have purchased any. The quantity of the affected products was about 397 pieces and 180 pieces were recalled. The recall percentage was 45%.

Case 16

The CFS, on 2.8.2017, learned that the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority issued a notice that certain eggs produced in the country were detected as containing a pesticide, fipronil, at levels which might cause adverse health effects. The CFS had contacted major local importers and conducted inspections at major retail outlets. According to the information published by the Dutch authority and the affected egg codes, investigation by the CFS showed that there was no importation of the affected batches into Hong Kong. For the sake of prudence, the CFS collected two samples of Dutch eggs of other batches at retail level for testing. The test results showed that the two samples contained fipronil at levels of 0.064 parts per million (ppm) and 0.055 ppm respectively, exceeding the maximum residue limit of 0.02 ppm as stipulated in local legislation. The CFS upon receiving the laboratory results on 4.8.2017 immediately notified and instructed the concerned importer to initiate a recall and issued press release to inform trade to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected product. The importer had imported by batches from January to August 2017 a total of 8,085 cartons of the affected product and distributed to its own retail shops. As the shelf life of the affected product was short, some batches had already expired during the

recall. The recall percentage was 42% and 3,425 cartons of the affected product were recalled.

Moreover, the CFS, as a precautionary measure, on 4.8.2017 adopted hold and test action at import level for eggs from the Netherlands. As the incident evolved, the precautionary measure of hold and test action at import level was applied to Belgium, Germany, France and ultimately all member states of the European Union by stages before end of August. On 31.12.2017, the CFS reviewed cautiously information provided by the authority of the European Union which indicated that all member states had taken appropriate measures to deal with farms with illegal usage of chemicals on poultry eggs and meat and strengthen surveillance in markets. It was decided to remove the precautionary measure of hold and test action at import level applied to all member states of the European Union on the same day.

Case 17

The CFS received notification from the Macau authority on 14.8.2017 that a batch of bottled preserved bean curd manufactured in Mainland and imported to Macau via Hong Kong was found to contain a pathogen, *Bacillus cereus*, at a level exceeding the safety standard of Macau and also not in compliance with Hong Kong's Microbiological Guidelines for Food. Upon notification, the CFS immediately contacted the Macau authority on the information of the product and distributor. According to the Macau authority, one bean curd sample was exported from the sole distributor of Hong Kong. The CFS contacted the distributor and found that a total of 1,488 cartons (23,808 cans) of the affected product were imported from Mainland in June 2017 and distributed to 219 retailers from late June to early August of 2017. The CFS issued press release on the same day and instructed the importer on 17.8.2017 to recall the affected product. As there was a wide distribution of the affected product at retail level including grocery shops and market stalls, the affected product was probably used up by consumers and it was customers' choice for return of the recalled products. A total of 2,891 cans of the affected product were recalled and the recall percentage was 12%.

Case 18

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 15.8.2017, learned that the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore issued a notice regarding withdrawal of batches of “RIBENA” products by the distributor in Singapore due to a faulty bottling machine which allowed excessive air to enter bottles of some batches. The CFS immediately followed up with the major importers and confirmed that 3 kinds of the affected products had imported into Hong Kong. The importer concerned had removed from shelves the affected product and initiated a recall. The total import quantity of the affected product was 185,208 bottles and 108,681 bottles were recalled, the recall percentage was 59%.

Case 19

The CFS received a notification on 9.9.2017 from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) of the European Commission that a kind of pasteurized milk cheese product was under recall because it was suspected to have been contaminated with salmonella organisms. The CFS immediately contacted the local importer and successfully confirmed with the importer concerned on 11.9.2017 that the affected product had been imported and distributed to a restaurant. The affected product had not been used and would be returned to the importer for disposal according to the CFS' instructions. Meanwhile, the CFS announced the case in the press release. The quantity of the affected product was 3.35 kilogram and all of them were recalled. Recall percentage was 100%.

Case 20

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 15.9.2017, learned that the Canadian authority issued a notice that a kind of prepackaged cereal for babies might contain the allergen, gluten which was not declared on the food label and were under recall. Upon notification, the CFS immediately followed up with the major importers and found that a total of 400 packs of the affected products were imported and distributed to 4 retailers. The CFS issued press release on the same day and instructed the importer to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected product and initiate a recall on the same day. A total of 174 packs of the affected product were recalled and the recall percentage was 44%.

Case 21

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 17.10.2017, learned that the UK Food Standards Agency issued a notice that the UK manufacturer of energy drink was recalling an affected batch of the product because it might contain food allergens, milk and soya, but were not declared on the food label. Upon notification, the CFS immediately followed up with major importers and found that a total of 24 boxes of the affected product were imported in September 2017 and immediately partly sold to a distributor. After notified of the incident by the supplier in October 2017, the importer immediately stopped sale and removed from shelves the affected product and initiated a recall. A total of 16 boxes of the affected product were recalled and the recall percentage was 67%. The CFS issued press release on the same day.

Case 22

The CFS, through its Food Incident Surveillance System on 4.11.2017, noted a notice issued by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland that some batches of cheese manufactured in the Ireland might have been contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes* and the affected products were being recalled. The CFS immediately contacted major local importers and retailers for follow up and received confirmation from one local importer on 7.11.2017 that some of the affected products had been imported into Hong Kong. The CFS immediately instructed the importer concerned on the same day to remove and stop sale of the affected batches of products and initiated recall. Meanwhile, the CFS announced in press release to urge consumers not to consume the affected products if purchased and the trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately if they possess them. The quantity of the affected products was about 62 kilogram (Kg) and 48.69 kg was recalled. The recall percentage was 78%.

Case 23

The CFS had been closely monitoring the incident of French infant and young children formula being contaminated with salmonella organisms. The CFS received notifications from the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed of the European Commission on 12.12.2017, 13.12.2017, 23.12.2017 and 17.1.2018 the updates of the recalled batches of three kinds of French infant and young children formula products of different batches suspected to be contaminated with salmonella organisms. Upon notification, the CFS immediately followed up with the concerned importer and found that a total of 615,768 tins of the affected products were imported by batches from April 2016 to February 2017 and were distributed to 4 distributors. The CFS had instructed the concerned importer to recall the affected products and issued press release on the same day. As the time between importation and notification of recall was from 10 months to more than one and a half year, the shelf life of some affected batches had already expired upon the recall notification. Consumers most probably had used up most of the affected products. A total of 35,803 tins of the affected products were recalled and the recall percentage was 6%.

**Food Recall Exercises in 2017
(Other than those mentioned in Table 9)
(14 cases)**

Case 1

The CFS collected soya bean curd with chili and sesame oil sample from a supermarket in To Kwa Wan for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme on 12.1.2017. The test result dated 17.1.2017 showed that the sample contained *Bacillus cereus* at a level of 120,000 per gram. The CFS immediately informed the vendor and distributor concerned of the test result, and instructed them to stop sale and recall the affected batch of the product. The quantity of the affected product was 18,240 bottles and 4,480 bottles were recalled. The recall percentage was 24.6% as the affected product had been offered for sale in the local market 10 months before sampling. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on 18.1.2017.

Case 2

The CFS collected roast beef sample from an online shop for testing under its regular Food Surveillance Programme on 13.2.2017. The test result dated 21.2.2017 showed the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in 25 grams of the sample, exceeding the standard of the Microbiological Guidelines for Food which states that *Listeria monocytogenes* should not be detected in 25 grams of food. The CFS informed the vendor of the test result and instructed to stop sale and recall the affected batch of the product. The concerned manufacturer suspended its production line temporarily to carry out thorough cleaning and disinfection. The total quantity of the affected product was 50.02 kg. The manufacturer had recalled 11.64 kg. The recall percentage was 23.3% as the product was ready-to-eat food and its shelf life was short. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on the same day.

Case 3

The CFS collected smoked salmon sample from a supermarket in Tai Po for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme on 18.4.2017. The test result dated 26.4.2017 showed the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in 25 grams of the sample, exceeding the standard of the Microbiological Guidelines for Food which states that *Listeria monocytogenes* should not be detected in 25 grams of food. The CFS immediately informed the vendor and importer of the test result and instructed to stop sale, remove from shelves and recall the affected batch of the product. The total quantity of the affected products was 7,800 packs. The manufacturer had recalled 467 packs. The recall percentage was 6% as the shelf life of the affected ready-to-eat products was short. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on the same day. Further investigation with the importer confirmed that the affected products had not subject to any processing after importation and had been distributed to other retailers. Stop sale and import ban of the affected product was enforced in Hong Kong. For the sake of prudence, the CFS further issued press release on 27.4.2017 and informed the exporting country of the import ban and alerted the trade.

Case 4

The CFS received a complaint from a member of the public. The complainant felt sick after consumption of coconut cake at a restaurant in Central. On 5.5.2017, the CFS carried out investigation at the restaurant and collected a sample of coconut milk powder which was the raw material of the cake for testing. The test result dated 9.5.2017 showed that the sample contained milk, a food allergen, but was not declared on the product's food label as an ingredient. The CFS followed up with the restaurant on 10.5.2017 and the coconut milk powder found out of stock. The CFS followed up with the importer (cum distributor) and the coconut milk powder was found out of stock. The CFS informed the distributor of the said irregularity and instructed to stop sale, remove from shelves all batches of the affected product and initiate a recall. The distributor sold 378 kg of the coconut milk powder to 11 catering establishments for the period from 1.5.2016 to 11.5.2017 for food production.

As most of the coconut milk powder has been used in food production, the distributor recalled 22.27 kg coconut milk powder. The recall percentage was 5.8%. The CFS announced and alerted the trade on 12.5.2017.

Case 5

The CFS found a batch of milk without import permission given by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene when carrying out a routine inspection to a consignment of Japanese food on 22.5.2017. The import quantity of the concerned product were 420 cartons of packing size 1 litre and 840 cartons of packing size 200 millilitre. The CFS asked the public not to consume the concerned product and the trade to stop sale or using the affected product. CFS had instructed importer concerned to stop sale, off shelf and initiate a recall of the product in question. A total of 205 cartons of packing size 1 litre and 78 cartons of packing size 200 millilitre were recalled. The recall percentage for packing size 1 litre was 48.8%, while for packing size 200 millilitre was 9.3%. The concerned products had only 1 month shelf life left during the recall. CFS issued press release and trade alert on the same day.

Case 6

The CFS received a notification on 30.5.2017 from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency that its manufacturer was recalling prepackaged flour as it might be contaminated with E. coli. 2,100 packs of the affected product had been imported to Hong Kong 6 months before the initiation of recall and the importer had distributed all affected product to 19 distributors after importation. CFS had traced the distribution of the affected product. As the time from the date of import to the receipt of the recall notification was more than half year, the product might have been consumed before the recall, therefore no product was successfully recalled. Moreover, E. coli cannot survive under high temperature and will be destroyed by thorough cooking. In fact, flour are usually consumed after cooking, and thus health risk for consumption of these products was not high. CFS issued press release and trade alert on the same day.

Case 7

The CFS received a notification on 25.6.2017 from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) about a food poisoning case in relation to the consumption of porcini mushrooms. CFS immediately conducted investigation and followed up with the concerned importer and packer of the product. Investigation found that the affected product was only for sale at a department store. The importer had imported 50 packs of the affected product in April 2017 and sold to the department store. The affected product was offered for sale for 2 months before the initiation of the recall. 18 packs of affected product were recalled and the recall percentage was 36%. The CFS had taken samples for morphological examination. Examination result dated 18.7.2018 showed that the sample might have been mixed with inedible or toxic porcini mushrooms. However, no mushroom toxin was detected. CFS issued press release and trade alert on the same day.

Case 8

The CFS received a notification on 2.8.2017 from the Macau authority that a batch of frozen buffalo meat imported from Hong Kong was found to contain a veterinary drug, chloramphenicol. Investigation found that the importer had imported a total of 1,400 cartons of the affected product from South East Asia, 30 cartons were re-exported to Macau while the remaining 1 370 cartons were sold to local distributors. The CFS requested the importer to recall the affected product and alerted the trade to stop selling or using the products concerned. Importers had distributed the affected product to 34 distributors. The CFS immediately traced the distribution of the products concerned. Investigation revealed that apart from the disposal of 3 cartons of the affected product by the distributors, all the affected products were sold out. As the affected product were sold to many distribution outlets, the affected product might have been consumed fast. The recall percentage was 0.21%. The CFS had issued press release and trade alert on 3.8.2017.

Case 9

When following up a case referred by a local organisation, the CFS collected cold pressed bottled fruit juice drink sample from a supermarket in North Point for testing on 14.8.2017. The test result dated 22.8.2017 showed that the sample contained patulin at a level of 93 parts per billion (ppb), exceeding the action level of 50ppb adopted by the CFS. The level is the same as the standard of the Codex Alimentarius Commission on patulin in apple or apple juice. The CFS informed the supermarket concerned of the irregularity. The supermarket stopped sale, removed from shelves and recalled the affected batch of the products according to the CFS' instructions. The quantity of the affected products was 300 bottles and 61 bottles were recalled. The recall percentage was 20.3% as the shelf life of the affected ready-to-eat products was short. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on 25.8.2017.

Case 10

The CFS was notified by the Australian authority on 22.9.2017 night that raw oysters harvested in a local harvesting area were detected with paralytic shellfish poisoning toxin. The oysters harvested from September 12 to 22 of 2017 from the harvesting area concerned were being recalled. According to the information provided by the Australian authority, a local importer, has imported some affected product into Hong Kong. The CFS immediately contacted the importer concerned to follow up. The importer confirmed that 180 dozens of the affected raw oysters had been imported into Hong Kong on 16.9.2017. Since oyster is highly perishable in nature and is to be used up quickly, the affected products might have been used up or disposed of upon receipt of the notification (6 days after import), resulting in unsuccessful recall. CFS issued press release and notified local trade on 23.9.2017.

Case 11

The CFS collected brown crab sample from a supermarket in Sha Tin for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme on 9.8.2017. The test result dated 17.10.2017 showed that the sample contained cadmium at a level of 2.84 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 2ppm. The CFS immediately informed the supermarket concerned of the irregularity. They stopped sale and recalled the affected batch of the product according to CFS' instructions.

As the affected product was imported for sale 10 months before sample collection, no product was successfully recalled. The affected product might have been consumed by consumers. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on the same day.

Case 12

The CFS collected packed rice stick sample from a shop in Sham Shui Po for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme on 12.10.2017. The test result dated 14.11.2017 showed that the sample contained cadmium at a level of 0.16 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 0.1ppm. The CFS immediately informed the vendor of the irregularity and instructed to off shelf and stop sale the affected product. Concerned importer also initiated recall of the affected batch of the product.

The quantity of the affected products were 27,000 boxes and 221 boxes were recalled. The recall percentage was 0.8% as the affect product was popular food in the market and it had probably been consumed quickly. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on 16.11.2017.

Case 13

While investigating a food safety related complaint about canned fried dace with trace amount of malachite green (0.78 parts per billion) on 15.11.2017, the CFS found the food was kept in a shop in Sham Shui Po. The CFS immediately instructed the vendor to stop sale and remove from shelves the affected batch of the product. The importer/distributor concerned also recalled voluntarily the affected products.

The quantity of the affected product was 2,300 cans and 988 cans were recalled. The recall percentage was 43%. In respect of the latest situation, the CFS issued press release and alerted the trade on 17.11.2017.

Case 14

The CFS received three food poisoning cases notified by the CHP of DH on 28.12.2017 and 29.12.2017. Upon investigation, it was found that the cases suspected to be related to raw oysters produced by an area in France which were supplied by two local importers. For the sake of prudence, the CFS issued press release on 29.12.2017 to suspend the import into and sale within Hong Kong of all raw oysters produced by the area concerned and instructed the two importers concerned to stop supplying and selling the affected raw oysters. The CFS's further investigation found that another two importers had imported and sold the affected raw oysters at retail level. The two importers concerned have immediately stopped supplying and selling the affected product, as well as initiating a recall according to CFS' instructions. The CFS further announced the updates of CFS' investigation in press release and notified local trade on 30.12.2018. The quantity of the affected oysters was about 3,127 kilogram (kg) and about 741 kg was recalled from the 4 importers concerned. The recall rate was 23.7%. Since oyster is highly perishable in nature and believed to be used up quickly or disposed of, only part of affected products were recalled.