

**For discussion
on 9 July 2019**

**Legislative Council Panel on
Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene**

**Improvements to the Information Technology Systems of
the Centre for Food Safety**

Purpose

This paper reports on the enhancement of information technology (IT) systems of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

Background

2. The CFS currently has 16 IT systems developed by contractors at different times to meet different needs. As each IT system (and its database) is independently designed, the organisation and structuring of data vary from one system to another. The data cannot be systematically integrated into a central database to facilitate retrieval and analysis. The lack of flexibility in system design is also a hindrance to the streamlining of workflow. At the end of 2017, the CFS started the preparatory work for full enhancement of its IT systems. In November 2017, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the creation of a supernumerary post of Senior Principal Executive Officer for 7 years to head the newly set-up Corporate and System Management Division under the CFS to holistically review the workflow of the CFS, revamp its IT systems for higher efficiency, and enhance the mode of operation through IT to support the work of its frontline staff and reinforce its capability in food import control, surveillance, food incident management and traceability.

Overall direction

3. The CFS is developing and setting up five major IT systems, namely the Food Trader Portal, the Food Import and Export Control System, the Food Incident Management System, the Food Surveillance System and the Food Classification and Coding System. The CFS expects the aforementioned systems to be rolled out in an order of priorities commencing from late 2019, and be completed by 2024 or earlier. Please refer to the **Annex** for the details and implementation timetable.

4. In developing the above IT systems, the CFS will pay special attention to system design in data organisation and data structure, with particular reference to retrieval, use and integration of data, to support the work of food safety management. The interfacing of these systems will also be examined to ensure feasible transfer and systematic integration of data, so as to provide a central database for easy management, retrieval and analysis of data to support risk assessment and risk-based inspections and surveillance.

Anticipated results

5. The enhanced IT systems will facilitate the collection and maintenance of information of importers, distributors and food imports by the CFS, simplify the steps and procedures for registration of food traders and declaration of food imports, and improve the exchange of information between the CFS and food importers/distributors. Through digitisation of information, the CFS can reduce clerical and data processing work and focus its resources on work of higher value and improve accuracy of information on imported food consignments maintained. The data collected by the IT systems will provide stronger scientific basis and increase effectiveness of risk-based food sampling by the CFS. In case of food incidents, comprehensive and accurate information on food imports will also enable the CFS to step up food traceability, promptly issue clear guidelines to food importers and distributors for effective tracing, intercepting and recalling problematic foods and devise follow-up actions

Advice sought

6. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Food and Health Bureau

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Centre for Food Safety

July 2019

**Specific contents of CFS's IT system enhancement and
implementation timetable**

IT systems	Implementation timetable
<p>1. <u>Food Trader Portal (FTP)</u></p> <p>With desktop and mobile application versions, this new portal will serve as a one-stop electronic communication platform between the CFS and food traders. Through the FTP, food traders can complete registration as food importers or distributors, submit applications for import licences and written import permission, and report arrival of imported food consignments by electronic means. The CFS can also make use of the FTP to collect information from and disseminate information to food importers at various stages of import of food consignments.</p>	<p>The FTP is expected to be rolled out in phases in late 2019 to interface with the existing Food Import Control System. Initially, the CFS will accord priority to electronic applications for written import permission and import licences for game, meat and poultry. The trade may choose whether or not to submit their applications by electronic means at this stage.</p> <p>The CFS will introduce the FTP to food importers in the first place, and arrange training sessions and trial runs for them before its launch, so that importers can understand and familiarise themselves with the operation of the portal.</p> <p>The ultimate goal of the CFS is to process all kinds of applications from food traders and collect/disseminate information from/to food importers by electronic means.</p>
<p>2. <u>Food Import and Export Control System (FIECS)</u></p> <p>This IT system will replace the existing Food Import Control System to support food import</p>	<p>The CFS will set up the FIECS in phases. The feasibility study is expected to be concluded in the third quarter of 2019. When Phase 1 is completed in the first quarter of 2021,</p>

IT systems	Implementation timetable
<p>control and the issue of necessary documentary certification.</p> <p>The new system will support workflow of import control, including the issue of written import permission and import licences, the recording of documentary checks, physical inspections and consignment arrival details, and the issue of release letters or other notices where necessary. It enables automated and computerised verification and checks, such as verifying the status of the slaughterhouse or processing plant declared in an import licence application, checking the submitted information of an import licence application against the information of the electronic health certificate or import bans, food alerts, etc.</p> <p>The CFS will actively explore the government to government (G2G) electronic health certification arrangement to reduce the information required to be filled out by the trade when making applications for import of food, and to ensure consistency of data on imported food consignments covered by their health certificates.</p>	<p>the CFS will proceed with the development of the next phase.</p>

IT systems	Implementation timetable
<p>3. <u>Food Incident Management System (FIMS)</u></p> <p>This new system will enable the CFS to record and trace the actions taken by the respective units in food incidents more effectively. The FIMS will enhance monitoring of the progress of follow-up actions such as food recalls. A knowledge base on risk assessments and relevant reference materials will be built up to facilitate efficient and accurate retrieval of past records on similar food incidents for reference by the CFS in future.</p>	<p>The CFS will develop the FIMS in phases. Phase 1 is expected to be completed by the end of 2020. By then, the CFS will proceed with the development of the next phase.</p>
<p>4. <u>Food Surveillance System (FSS)</u></p> <p>The existing FSS will be revamped to better support food surveillance work.</p> <p>A database of retail stores will be set up under the revamped system to facilitate the CFS in selecting and collecting food samples in a scientific manner. The system will interface with the FIECS to support food surveillance at the import level.</p>	<p>The CFS will enhance and revamp the FSS in phases. It is expected to gradually launch the enhancement functions starting from end of 2020. The revamp of the FSS is expected to be completed in mid-2022.</p>

IT systems	Implementation timetable
<p data-bbox="256 300 778 383">5. <u>Food Classification and Coding System</u></p> <p data-bbox="304 427 778 898">It is an integrated food classification and coding system. Under the system, each food product will be assigned a code to enable recording, retrieval and analysis of food data. Searching tools will be available for the trade and the CFS staff to identify the correct code of a food product.</p>	<p data-bbox="815 300 1337 383">The system is expected to be completed by the end of 2020.</p>