

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1414/19-20
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by the Administration)

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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 9 June 2020, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan (Deputy Chairman)
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, SBS, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, SBS, MH, JP
Hon Andrew WAN Siu-kin
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon CHAN Hoi-yan
- Members absent** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Hon CHU Hoi-dick
Hon SHIU Ka-chun
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon HUI Chi-fung

Public Officers : Item IV
attending

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Ms Chelsea WONG Wing-chee
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Dr Edwin TSUI Lok-kin
Controller, Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Ms Mildred CHEUNG Mei-yee
Assistant Director (Corporate and System Management),
Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr Jackie LEUNG Ching-kan
Assistant Director (Risk Management), Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item V

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3

Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Michelle YEUNG Lee
Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Health)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Ernest WU Kai-hang
Veterinary Officer (Technical Services)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Clerk in : Miss Josephine SO
attendance : Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

Staff in attendance : Ms Wendy LO
Senior Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Cally LAI
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

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I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper No. CB(2)1122/19-20)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 were confirmed.

II. Information paper issued since the last meeting

2. Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1128/19-20(01) and (02))

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 14 July 2020 at 2:30 pm:

- (a) Progress of the work in tackling the threat of antimicrobial resistance in food animals; and
- (b) Progress on provision of facilities for the handling of abortuses.

(Post-meeting note: Members were informed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1262/19-20 issued on 24 June 2020 that the regular meeting originally scheduled for 14 July 2020 was rescheduled to 13 July 2020 from 9:00 am to 10:30 am in order to avoid clashing with the Finance Committee meeting proposed to be held in the afternoon of 14 July 2020.)

IV. Enhancement of the information technology systems and the Food Surveillance Programme of the Centre for Food Safety

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1128/19-20(03) and (04))

4. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the progress made by the Centre for

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Food Safety ("CFS") of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in enhancing its information technology ("IT") systems, and the implementation of its Food Surveillance Programme ("FSP") in 2019, as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1128/19-20(03)). Members noted the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(2)1128/19-20(04)).

Enhancement of the information technology systems

5. The Deputy Chairman and Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed support for the enhancement of the five IT systems of CFS (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) to increase CFS' efficiency, reinforce its capability in food import control and surveillance, improve its effectiveness in food incident management and strengthen food traceability. Controller, Centre for Food Safety ("Controller/CFS") advised that CFS would enhance the five IT systems in order of priorities. The systems would interface with one another to provide a well-connected information network in support of risk profiling and risk-based inspection for strengthened food safety control and traceability.

6. In response to Dr KWOK Ka-ki's enquiry about the benefits to be brought about by the enhancement of CFS' IT systems, Assistant Director (Corporate and System Management), CFS gave an account of the respective designed functions of each system to be developed/enhanced in stages. Dr KWOK questioned whether the enhancement of the IT systems could bring direct benefits to the general public. In his view, in tandem with the enhancement of the five IT systems of CFS, the Administration should make further efforts to improve the design and functions of CFS' website as well as its Food Safety Mobile Application, so as to provide the public with an easy access to information relating to food safety and health. Mr Wilson OR shared a similar view, adding that CFS should adopt user-friendly design for its website and mobile applications ("mobile apps") to enhance dissemination of food safety information and strengthen interactive communication with the public.

7. Controller/CFS responded that CFS had already made use of various social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Instagram) to issue food alerts and disseminate food safety news on food incidents. CFS would consider members' suggestions to see whether further improvements could be made in this regard.

8. Dr KWOK Ka-ki suggested that CFS should explore the use of new technologies, e.g. displaying QR codes/smart labels on prepackaged food

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products for consumers' scanning to get more related information about the products, so as to enhance the traceability and reliability of tested/certified food products. Controller/CFS responded that although CFS had no plan to make use of QR codes/smart labels to provide consumers with additional food product information at the present stage, he would relay Dr KWOK's suggestion to the Consumer Liaison Group which was set up under CFS to collect public views on food safety issues.

Food Surveillance Programme for 2019

Monitoring and regulating online sale of food

9. Mr KWOK Wai-keung noted that compared with 2015, the number of online food samples collected for testing in 2016 increased more than a double from about 1 500 to about 4 000. The sample size was further increased progressively to about 4 900 in 2019. He enquired about the types of samples collected for testing in 2019 and details of the seven unsatisfactory samples which had been detected with metallic contaminants, pesticide residues or veterinary drug residues exceeding the relevant safety standards.

10. Controller/CFS responded that CFS adopted a risk-based principle in determining the types of food samples to be collected for testing. The online food samples collected for testing between 2016 and 2019 included chilled or frozen aquatic products, cereals and cereal products as well as vegetables, fruits and related products. Assistant Director (Risk Management), CFS ("AD(RM)/CFS") said that taking into account the views of the Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee of LegCo, as well as food surveillance results, food incidents in Hong Kong and other economies and the relevant risk analyses, CFS took measures to improve FSP in 2019. Such measures included increasing the number and the proportion of online food samples assigned for microbiological testing (more than 10% of the total samples). The seven unsatisfactory samples identified in 2019 consisted of five aquatic product samples, one fruit sample and one honey sample. Mr KWOK Wai-keung requested the Administration to provide information on the place(s) of origin of the seven unsatisfactory online food samples.

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11. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan expressed concern about the regulatory control over online food selling activities conducted through overseas websites (e.g. ordering salted fermented seafood (such as fermented crab) from Korean online shopping websites). USFH responded that as the coverage of regulation and consumer protection for food transactions made abroad could be different from those in Hong Kong, CFS had been advising the public through various publicity means that they should pay attention to the

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potential risks associated with purchasing food products from overseas websites.

12. Ms CHAN Hoi-yan was also concerned about the safety of food products ordered from online food ordering platforms/mobile apps (i.e. food/dishes made and delivered to customers upon receiving online orders). She and Mr Wilson OR asked whether CFS had checked against food suppliers on whether the food purchased online was stored at a safe and proper temperature during the transportation/delivery process to customers, by collecting samples from food delivery motorbikes for testing before the food was delivered to customers.

13. USFH and Controller/CFS responded that with effect from February 2016, FEHD required operators who did not have physical premises to apply for permits in accordance with the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) ("FBR") if they sold restricted food online. Permits were issued on the conditions that the operators must provide particulars, such as permit number, type(s) of restricted food permitted for sale and business address, on their websites and printed promotional materials for consumers' reference and for verification on FEHD's website. In addition, the restricted food must be obtained from lawful sources and prepackaged by the suppliers before delivering to customers, the packages should not be tampered with during transportation to prevent cross-contamination, and the food should be stored at a safe and proper temperature at all times.

14. USFH and Controller/CFS further said that from 2017 to 2019, FEHD conducted about 4 200 inspections on food premises supplying food for online sale, as well as places of business of online food ordering platforms which had obtained permits for online sale of restricted food. FEHD had also purchased food from online food ordering platforms to check whether the food concerned was stored at a safe and proper temperature upon delivery to customers. About 200 checks were made between 2017 and 2019 and the results were all satisfactory. Controller/CFS said that FEHD would step up publicity to remind food suppliers of the importance of properly storing the food concerned during the transportation/delivery process to prevent cross-contamination.

15. In response to the Chairman's enquiry about the testing results of online food samples, AD(RM)/CFS said that from 2018 up to present, 30 online food samples were collected for microbiological testing. The test results of all samples were satisfactory. In view of the increasing popularity of purchasing food from online food ordering platforms/mobile apps, CFS would strengthen surveillance and sample tests on online food sale.

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Surveillance on aquatic products and related products

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16. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan noted that among the 6 100 samples of aquatic products and related products collected for testing of metallic contaminants and veterinary drug residues in 2019 under FSP, 31 unsatisfactory samples were found. She and Mr Steven HO requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the 6 100 samples by (a) types (i.e. product classification; raw versus cooked; captured versus cultured) and (b) sources (i.e. their place of origin or from where the samples were bought/taken).

17. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan expressed concern that compared with other food groups, the unsatisfactory rate for aquatic products and related products was quite high. She asked whether CFS would step up sample tests on aquatic products and related products (e.g. sashimi and sushi) and monitor the safety of relevant food products sold by restaurants and online food ordering platforms. In her view, CFS should strengthen publicity to remind consumers of the potential health risks associated with consumption of aquatic products.

18. Controller/CFS responded that aquatic products, being more liable to bacteriological or chemical contamination in the harvesting zone or handling process, were considered as relatively high-risk food items. CFS had hence increased the number of aquatic product samples taken at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing of metallic contaminants and veterinary drug residues in recent years. As mentioned earlier, CFS had also purchased food from online food ordering platforms for microbiological testing to monitor the safety of online food sale. On the education front, CFS had been advising susceptible population groups to avoid consumption of those types of fish which might contain higher levels of metallic contaminants, and requiring importers to obtain health certificates issued by relevant authorities of the exporting economies to certify that the aquatic products concerned were fit for human consumption.

Surveillance of imported vegetables

19. Mr Steven HO enquired about the follow-up actions taken by CFS in respect of sampling checks of imported vegetables in response to the direct investigation report entitled "Food and Environment Hygiene Department's System of Safety Control for Imported Fruits and Vegetables" published by the Office of The Ombudsman on 13 November 2017. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the measures taken by FEHD to address the problem of vehicles evading CFS' inspection of food consignments at the Man Kam To Food Control Office ("MKTFCO"), as pointed out by the Audit Commission's report on value-for-money review of the work of CFS in respect of food safety management and import control of foods published in October 2018.

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20. AD(RM)/CFS advised that CFS had sought the assistance of the Customs and Excise Department ("C&ED") in intercepting targeted vehicles (including vehicles carrying vegetables) for referral to CFS staff for inspection at MKTFCO. In response to the recommendations made in The Ombudsman's investigation report, frontline staff members of CFS had adopted the principle of random sampling when collecting vegetables from vehicles for inspection and testing. In addition to taking vegetables near the door of the storage compartment, they would collect vegetables placed at the inner part of the compartment using elevating work platforms, if necessary. CFS had also issued a checklist on the inspection of meat, poultry, egg, milk and frozen confections consignments for frontline staff of boundary control points, reminding them of the required import documents for different types of food and the items to be inspected.

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21. In relation to the testing of vegetables under FSP in recent years, Mr Steven HO requested the Administration to provide (a) the respective numbers of samples of local vegetables and imported vegetables collected for testing in each of those years and (b) the respective percentage shares of the tested samples in the total volume of local vegetables and imported vegetables supplied in the local market.

22. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the actions to be taken by CFS if unsatisfactory vegetable samples from the Mainland were identified. AD(RM)/CFS responded that if vegetables imported from Mainland registered vegetables farms were detected with excessive pesticide residues or metallic contaminants, CFS would trace the sources of the vegetables concerned and alert the Mainland authorities which would normally suspend the export from the implicated farms until measures had been taken to rectify the problem.

Metallic contamination in food

23. The Deputy Chairman noted that among the 1 790 samples with a shorter shelf life which were tested for metallic contaminants from November 2019 to May 2020, 13 samples were found to have exceeded the maximum levels for metallic contaminants adopted after the implementation of the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) (Amendment) Regulation 2018 ("the Amendment Regulation"). She enquired about the follow-up actions taken regarding these unsatisfactory samples. She also expressed concern about the testing results of rice products in respect of the level of cadmium since the implementation of the Amendment Regulation.

24. Controller/CFS responded that the Amendment Regulation first took effect on 1 November 2019 for certain types of fresh food (i.e. fresh fruit and

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vegetable and their juices, fresh meat and edible offal of animal and poultry, aquatic animals and poultry eggs). It would cover all food (including rice) from 1 November 2020 onwards. AD(RM)/CFS said that from November 2019 to May 2020, more than 3 500 food samples were collected for testing of metallic contaminants. The overall satisfaction rate was 99.6%. Among the 3 500 samples, 1 790 samples (including vegetables and fisheries products) were tested against the maximum levels of metallic contaminants set out in the Amendment Regulation and the overall satisfaction rate was 99.3%. Regarding the unsatisfactory samples, CFS had taken appropriate follow-up actions, including assessing the associated risks on public health, tracing the sources of the food consignments concerned, informing the relevant authorities of the places of origin, instructing venders to stop selling the implicated batches of foods, requesting the importers/distributors to recall and dispose of the implicated foods as needed, making public announcements and explaining to the public the food safety risks involved, etc.

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25. At the Deputy Chairman's request, the Administration would provide information on the place(s) of origin of the 13 unsatisfactory samples found to have exceeded the maximum levels of metallic contaminants under the Amendment Regulation.

Chilled or frozen pork being sold as fresh pork

26. Mr Steven HO said that it had been reported that the situation of unscrupulous traders selling chilled or frozen pork as fresh pork was quite rampant due to the persistently high prices of live pigs since the outbreaks of African Swine Fever ("ASF") in mid-2019 on the Mainland. Quite a number of fresh meat shops displayed and stored chilled pork in ways that were non-compliant with the licensing conditions (e.g. failing to keep chilled pork in a chiller maintained at a temperature between 0 and 4 degrees Celsius, and hanging up defrosted pork to pass it off as fresh pork). He asked whether FEHD and C&ED had strengthened inspections on fresh meat shops to see whether there were contraventions of FBR or the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362) ("TDO"). He was also concerned how FEHD would detect non-fresh pork when inspecting fresh meat shops.

27. USFH responded that a fresh provision shop licence must be obtained for the food business which involved the sale of fresh, chilled or frozen pork. Enforcement actions would be taken by FEHD and C&ED respectively against breaches of relevant licensing conditions and contraventions of TDO involving the suspected sale of chilled or frozen pork with false claims as fresh pork. Controller/CFS said that at the import level, FEHD would check the imported chilled or frozen pork in each consignment and monitor the distribution of such products. A dedicated team had been set up to monitor the operation of fresh provision shops and market meat stalls which were

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suspected of selling chilled or frozen pork as fresh pork. During the regular inspection on fresh provision shops and market meat stalls and upon receipt of complaints, FEHD would inspect the invoices and sources of the relevant pig carcasses. If there were suspicions over the relevant invoices and sources of pig carcasses, FEHD would carry out investigations and take appropriate follow up actions, including deploying agent provocateurs to collect evidence and information.

Import of and regulatory arrangements for sale of hairy crabs

28. The Deputy Chairman said that she had received complaints that hairy crabs from unknown sources were sold in the local market. She enquired about CFS' seasonal surveillance work on hairy crabs. Controller/CFS responded that CFS and C&ED had been working in collaboration to combat illegal import of hairy crabs into Hong Kong. At present, vendors selling hairy crabs had to obtain the Shell Fish (Hairy Crab) Permit or relevant permission granted by FEHD which required that all hairy crabs for sale should be accompanied with health certificates issued by the relevant authorities of the exporting economies. FEHD would conduct regular inspections on those premises issued with the permits to ensure that the permit holders complied with the terms and conditions of the permits.

Follow-up on imported Brazilian meat

29. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the criteria adopted in determining those 447 Brazilian establishments eligible for exporting meat, poultry meat and eggs to Hong Kong after the Brazilian meat incident in 2017. Controller/CFS responded that after rounds of discussion between CFS and the Brazilian authorities, specific import requirements were laid down on the importation of Brazilian meat into Hong Kong by the end of 2019. These requirements were based on food safety principles and in line with the standards of the World Organisation for Animal Health ("OIE"), the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System and Good Manufacturing Practices; and had strengthened risk based veterinary audit and drug monitoring programmes, etc. The Brazilian authorities had subsequently drawn up a list of eligible establishments according to the specific import requirements and revised the official health certificates of beef, pork, poultry meat and eggs to enhance traceability.

Issues on coronavirus disease 2019 in food business

30. Mr KWOK Wai-keung expressed concern that it had been reported that some workers responsible for putting labels on pre-prepackaged fruits and vegetables imported from Britain at Kerry Logistics' warehouse in Kwai Chung were confirmed to have been infected with the coronavirus disease

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2019 ("COVID-19") and there were speculations that COVID-19 might have been transmitted through the food packaging process. He asked whether CFS or relevant departments had investigated into these cases and whether CFS had monitored the safety of food packaging in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19.

31. USFH responded that COVID-19 was a respiratory illness and the primary transmission route was through person-to-person contact and direct contact with respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughed or sneezed. According to the "COVID-19 and food safety: guidance for food businesses" issued by the World Health Organization in April 2020, COVID-19 virus could not multiply in food. It was highly unlikely that people could contract COVID-19 from food or food packaging. To date, there was no evidence of viruses that caused respiratory illnesses being transmitted via food or food packaging. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health had carried out epidemiological investigations and contact tracing on the above confirmed cases. All environmental samples taken from the Kerry Logistics' warehouse were tested negative for COVID-19 virus.

V. Results of the study on pet food products in Hong Kong
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1128/19-20(05) and (06))

32. At the invitation of the Chairman, USFH briefed members on the results of the study on pet food products in Hong Kong ("the Study"), as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1128/19-20(05)). Members noted the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(2)1128/19-20(06)).

Scope and results of the Study

33. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan noted that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") had, in determining what standards should be adopted in the Study, made reference to the relevant legislation of other places/regions where extensive regulatory pet food safety standards were in place. She asked whether the Administration would consider setting local safety standards for assessing the safety of pet food products available in the Hong Kong market.

34. USFH and Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine), AFCD ("AD(IQ)/AFCD") made the following responses:

- (a) there were at present no commonly adopted standards on the safety of pet food at the international level. When determining

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the satisfactory standards adopted in the Study, the Administration had made reference to the relevant legislation of other places/regions where extensive regulatory pet food safety standards were in place, including the European Union ("EU"), Japan, Mainland and Taiwan. While the standards might slightly vary among these places/regions, standards that were commonly used by these places/regions are adopted as the satisfactory standards in the Study;

- (b) the results of the Study indicated that the overall safety of pet food products sold in Hong Kong was satisfactory. In addition, the Administration had not come across any major incident concerning the safety of pet food products in Hong Kong in recent years; and
- (c) that said, the Administration would closely monitor the local situation and keep in view further developments on the international front related to the safety of pet food products (e.g. whether common safety standards would be established by OIE). The Administration would also monitor the number and nature of complaints and cases in relation to pet food products received by AFCD, the Consumer Council and C&ED, which could be an indication of the safety standards of pet food products sold in the local market.

35. In response to Mr Steven HO's enquiry, AD(IQ)/AFCD advised that the test result of a pet food product sample would be regarded as "satisfactory" if the sample was not tested with a level of the eight common harmful microbes or substances (namely, (a) Salmonella; (b) Escherichia coli (E. coli), including O157; (c) Listeria monocytogenes; (d) Aflatoxin B1; (e) Melamine; (f) Malathion; (g) Lead; and (h) Arsenic) exceeding the satisfactory standards as set out in Table 1 of the Administration's paper. In general, none of the 360 pet food product samples collected for the purpose of conducting the Study was tested with an unsatisfactory result in relation to the standards adopted.

36. The Deputy Chairman said that it had been reported that a total of 1 084 pet food products from 80 brands were tested against 130 harmful microbes and substances in a pet food study conducted in the United States in 2017. According to that study, nearly 80% of the samples contained lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury and Bisphenol A. She expressed concern over the arrangement of the Study that the 360 pet food products were only tested against the presence of eight common harmful microbes and substances. In her view, the types of harmful substances tested were far from adequate or comprehensive, when compared with the wide spectrum of harmful microbes

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and substances tested under pet food studies conducted by overseas jurisdictions and international organizations.

37. AD(IQ)/AFCD, Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Health), AFCD and ("SVO(AH)/AFCD") and Veterinary Officer (Technical Services), AFCD ("VO(TS)/AFCD") made the following responses:

- (a) in determining which harmful microbes and substances should be tested under the Study, the Administration had made reference to (i) the relevant legislation of other places/regions where extensive regulatory pet food safety standards were in place as well as (ii) the types of harmful microbes and substances tested under two similar studies conducted by the Consumer Council in 2014 and 2015;
- (b) the eight harmful microbes and substances tested under the Study were considered likely to pose a higher health risk to pet animals and were commonly found in pet food products with a higher recall rate. The results of sample tests against these items could generally reflect the safety level of pet food products; and
- (c) taking into account that the Study had to be completed within a reasonable time and the cost to be incurred, the Administration arranged testing of pet food products for the eight selected harmful microbes and substances to assess the safety of pet food products available in Hong Kong.

38. Notwithstanding the above explanations, the Deputy Chairman considered that the Administration should continue to conduct pet food studies, and most important of all, to test more types of harmful substances (e.g. cadmium and mercury) in future studies so as to fully assess the safety of pet food products in Hong Kong. She also suggested the Administration make reference to relevant legislation of overseas jurisdictions and consider the need for regulating pet food products sold in Hong Kong market in respect of production, import or distribution. The Chairman agreed that the Administration should consider the need for introducing a regulatory regime for the production and quality control of pet food products, as it could provide a basis for the future development and planning for local production of pet food.

39. USFH assured members that although the results of the Study indicated that the overall safety of pet food products sold in Hong Kong was satisfactory, AFCD would continue to keep in view the safety of pet food products available in the local market. In the past five years, AFCD received an average of about five complaint cases with regard to pet food products

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each year. None of them involved report of outbreak of pet animals falling ill due to consumption of pet food products.

40. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen noted that pet food product samples were tested for contamination with melamine and cyanuric acid under the Consumer Council's 2014 study on commercial pet food. According to that study, aflatoxin B1, melamine and cyanuric acid were found in some of the samples and the long-term intake of both melamine and cyanuric acid might lead to formation of crystals, resulting in blockage of tubules in kidneys that might cause acute renal failure in animals. He asked why cyanuric acid was not tested under the Study. He also expressed concern whether further initiatives would be taken by AFCD to monitor the safety of pet food in Hong Kong after completion of the Study.

41. SVO(AH)/AFCD responded that as there were currently no specific safety standards for cyanuric acid in pet food recognized by international organizations, pet food product samples were not tested for cyanuric acid under the Study. It should be noted that although trace amount of aflatoxin B1, melamine or cyanuric acid was detected in some of the samples under the Consumer Council's 2014 study on commercial pet food, the levels were all within the safety limits established by EU/the United States or of minimal significance. The Administration would keep in view whether common standards for cyanuric acid would be adopted by overseas places/regions in the future.

42. In response to Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's further enquiry, VO(TS)/AFCD said that the complaints on pet food products received by AFCD in the past five years were mainly related to the quality of the products, unfair trade practices and suspected illegal operation of pet stores which sold pet food.

Follow-up on pet food incidents

43. Mr Steven HO expressed concern about the risk of animal disease (e.g. ASF and Avian Flu) transmission through consumption of pet food products or raw meat. AD(IQ)/AFCD and SVO(AH)/AFCD responded that commercial pet food available in Hong Kong was usually pre-packaged/processed food, the production of which had to meet the safety standards adopted by pet food manufacturers. The manufacturing process of pet food products would generally kill the bacteria and viruses which might cause illness to pets. So far, there was no evidence of viruses that caused animal diseases being transmitted via pet food products or consumption of raw meat. That said, pet owners were advised not to feed their pets with raw meat or meat from unknown sources.

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44. In response to Mr Steven HO's further enquiry about the follow-up actions taken by AFCD in response to pet food incidents, SVO(AH)/AFCD said that AFCD had kept records about major pet food producers and distributors in Hong Kong. This would facilitate the taking of follow-up actions (e.g. initiating product recalls) in the event of pet food incidents.

VI. Any other business

45. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:03 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
31 July 2020