立法會
Legislative Council

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Background brief prepared by
the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 8 June 2021**

**Enhancement of the information technology systems
of the Centre for Food Safety**

Purpose

       This paper provides background information on the work of the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department regarding enhancement of its information technology ("IT") systems, and summarizes the views and concerns of members of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on the subject.

Background

2.   According to information provided by the Administration in June 2020, the existing IT systems of CFS were developed by contractors at different times to meet different needs. As each system (and its database) was independently designed, the organization and structuring of data vary from one system to another. Besides, the various systems cannot be completely integrated to facilitate retrieval and analysis of data. In view of this, CFS reviewed comprehensively its IT systems at the end of 2017 and made plans to revamp the systems for higher efficiency, with a view to enhancing CFS' capability in food import control, surveillance, food incident management and traceability.

3.   Specifically, CFS will develop and update in stages five major IT systems, namely the Food Trader Portal ("FTP"), the Food Import and Export Control System ("FIECS"), the Food Incident Management System ("FIMS"), the Food Surveillance System ("FSS") and the Food Classification and Coding System ("FCCS"), in order of priorities.

Food Trader Portal

4. With desktop and mobile application versions, FTP will serve as a one-stop electronic communication platform between CFS and food traders. Through FTP[1], food traders can, by electronic means, complete or renew registration as food importers or distributors, submit applications for import licences or import permissions, and report arrival of imported food consignments. CFS can also make use of FTP to collect information from and disseminate information to food importers at various stages of import of food consignments.

Food Import and Export Control System

5. The new FIECS is to replace the existing Food Import Control System to support the workflow of import control, including (a) the issue of written import permissions and import licences, (b) the recording of documentary checks, physical inspections and consignment arrival details, and (c) the issue of release letters or other notices, where necessary. FIECS will be equipped with automated functions, such as selecting food consignments for physical inspection, verifying the status of the slaughterhouse or processing plant declared in an import licence application, cross-checking the submitted information on an import licence application against the information on electronic health certificates, import bans, food alerts etc. The use of FIECS to replace the manual processes of data input and verification will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of food import control.

Food Incident Management System

6. FIMS is another new system to be established to strengthen CFS' effectiveness in recording and tracing the actions taken by relevant units in food incidents, so as to enhance CFS' monitoring of the progress of follow-up actions including food recalls. FIMS is equipped with a knowledge base on risk assessments and related materials for effective and accurate retrieval of past records/relevant information on similar food incidents for reference by CFS in future. FIMS can also trace the sources of problematic foods to facilitate CFS' issue of clear guidelines to food importers and distributors in the first instance as well as to devise follow-up actions.

Food Classification and Coding System

7. FCCS is an integrated food classification and coding system, under which different food products will be assigned a code to enable recording,

---

[1] The use of FTP is voluntary.

retrieval and analysis of food data. Searching tools will be available for CFS staff and the trade to identify the correct code of a food product.

Food Surveillance System

8. Apart from establishing new IT systems, CFS will also revamp the existing FSS to better support food surveillance work. Under the revamped FSS, a database of retail stores will be set up for an improved approach of selecting and collecting food samples for surveillance by CFS. FSS will also interface with FIECS, such that if imported food requiring the collection of samples for surveillance is identified, the system will alert the CFS staff concerned. Moreover, information on the food samples and food importers can be loaded into FSS automatically, which would reduce the work involved in repeated manual input and verification of data, thus improving sampling efficiency and record accuracy.

Members' views and concerns

9. The Panel received the Administration's briefing on its work in enhancing the IT systems of CFS at the meeting on 9 June 2020. Members' views and concerns are summarized below.

Implementation timetable and expected benefits

10. Members, in general, supported the enhancement of the five major IT systems of CFS to increase its overall work efficiency and, in particular, to reinforce CFS' capability in food import control and surveillance as well as to improve its effectiveness in food incident management and traceability.

11. In response to members' enquiries about the implementation timetable and the expected benefits from the enhancement, the Administration advised that the five IT systems would be/were expected to be rolled out in an order of priorities, commencing from late 2019 and be completed by 2024 or earlier. 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.

Other relevant issues

12. Some members were of the views that in tandem with the enhancement of the five major IT systems of CFS, further efforts should be made 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.

13.   According to the Administration, CFS had already made use of various social media platforms (e.g. Government websites, Facebook and Instagram) to issue food alerts and disseminate food safety news on food incidents. CFS would consider members' views and suggestions to see whether further improvements could be made in this regard.

14.   There was a suggestion that CFS should adopt user-friendly design for its website and mobile applications to enhance the dissemination of food safety information and to strengthen interactive communication with the public. Also, CFS should explore the use of new technologies (e.g. displaying QR codes/smart labels on prepackaged food for consumers' scanning to obtain related information about the food products), so as to enhance the traceability and reliability of tested/certified food products.

15.   The Administration responded that although CFS had no plan at the present stage to make use of QR codes/smart labels to provide consumers with additional food product information, it would relay members' suggestions to the Consumer Liaison Group, which was set up under CFS to collect public views on food safety issues, for consideration.

Recent development

16.   The Administration will update members on the latest progress of enhancing the IT systems of CFS at the Panel meeting on 8 June 2021.

Relevant papers

17.   A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 June 2021

**Relevant papers on enhancement of the
information technology systems of the Centre for Food Safety**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	12.7.2019 *	Information paper provided by the Administration entitled "Improvements to the Information Technology Systems of the Centre for Food Safety" (LC Paper No. CB(2)1786/18-19(02))
	9.6.2020 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes

* Issue date

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 June 2021