

**For Information
25 October 2021**

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

**Ancillary Facilities for Storage and Distribution of
Chilled Meat and Poultry**

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the latest situation of ancillary facilities for storage and distribution of chilled meat and poultry in Hong Kong.

Supply of chilled meat and poultry

2. Chilled meat and poultry refer to meat and poultry which have been subject to the pre-chilling process immediately after slaughtering and are kept at a temperature between 0°C and 4°C. The shelf life of chilled meat and poultry is in general about a week¹. At present, chilled pork and beef make up around 11% and 4% of the overall supply of pork and beef in Hong Kong respectively, while chilled poultry accounts for around 20% of the overall supply of poultry in Hong Kong. The import volume of chilled pork, beef and poultry in the past three years is as follows:

	Import volume of chilled meat and poultry ²		
	2018	2019	2020
Chilled pork	9 809 tonnes	15 850 tonnes	30 746 tonnes
Chilled beef	9 897 tonnes	13 984 tonnes	12 558 tonnes
Chilled poultry	92 262 tonnes	103 848 tonnes	102 910 tonnes

¹ With special treatment (such as vacuum packaging), the shelf life of chilled meat can be as long as up to several weeks. On the other hand, frozen meat and poultry must be stored at -18°C or below and the shelf life is normally a few months or more.

² Statistics of the Census and Statistics Department

3. Chilled pork is mainly imported from Thailand, while chilled beef is mainly imported from Australia and Brazil. Owing to the shorter shelf life, chilled meat is usually imported by air and the quantity of each consignment is limited. Upon arrival, imported chilled meat will mostly be transported to food factories for processing (including re-packaging), or distributed to retail outlets directly.

4. On chilled poultry, the Mainland is the major source of chilled poultry of Hong Kong (accounting for 97% or above). Chilled water birds (e.g. geese and ducks) and land birds (e.g. chickens and pigeons) imported from the Mainland are required to be slaughtered separately at processing plants registered in the Mainland. The two types of poultry will not be processed together in the same plant. Most of the slaughtered water and land birds will be transported from different locations to Hong Kong before 10 p.m. on the same day after completion of inspection at Man Kam To. Importers of chilled poultry will, according to the clients' demand on the quantity and combination of different types and breeds of poultry, carry out the sorting and distribution procedures (excluding processing and re-packaging) and then deliver the chilled poultry to restaurants, markets, fresh provision shops and other retail outlets. To tie in with the operation of restaurants and retailers, sorting and distribution procedures will be carried out overnight to facilitate delivery early in the morning. Although the quantity of chilled poultry at daytime is relatively small, the distribution and delivery procedures are basically carried out round the clock.

5. In order to ensure the food safety of chilled poultry, in granting approval for traders to import chilled poultry from the Mainland into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department imposes conditions on how the goods vehicles used for transportation should be equipped, requiring that any such vehicle should have an enclosed conveying compartment with refrigerating and temperature measuring devices. Besides, the CFS requires that the chilled poultry should be kept in their original packaging and stored at a temperature between 0°C and 4°C throughout the process of transporting the chilled poultry from registered processing plants in the Mainland to food factories, restaurants or retail outlets in Hong Kong. The temperature should in no circumstances exceed 8°C.

Ancillary facilities for storage and distribution of chilled meat and poultry

6. While the distribution and delivery of most of the chilled poultry imported from the Mainland are completed on the same day of importation, depending on operational needs, traders may also temporarily store a small quantity of imported chilled poultry at the required temperature. At present, there are a total of 75 licensed cold stores in Hong Kong, which mainly provide cold storage facilities for frozen food. These cold stores generally do not operate round the clock, and quite a number of them close on Sundays and public holidays. On the other hand, the importation, distribution and delivery of chilled poultry are basically carried out on a 24-hour basis and seven days a week. The traders take, deliver and transport the chilled poultry incessantly early in the morning every day. The Hong Kong Chilled Meat & Poultry Association³ expressed that importers of chilled poultry found it difficult to rent licensed cold stores in the market due to the difference in the mode of operation between the chilled poultry and the frozen food trades. Some of them who rent and refurbish premises in industrial buildings to operate their own licensed cold stores for distribution of chilled poultry also face certain difficulties.

Latest Situation

7. On the premises to safeguard food safety and to ensure diversity of food supply, and taking into account the difficulties faced by the chilled poultry trade as mentioned above, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) has been providing assistance to the trade to search for sites for setting up storage and distribution facilities for chilled meat and poultry. After gauging the views of the trade, FHB obtained the planning permission of the Town Planning Board (TPB) in 2016 for short-term use of a piece of government land in San Tin, Yuen Long as storage and distribution facilities for chilled meat and poultry. The government land was leased to the trade by way of open tender. However, the successful bidder later remarked that the size and location of the site was not as suitable. The facility had not been set up in the end and the site was returned to the Government. FHB continued to maintain communication with the chilled poultry trade and the relevant departments on the identification of sites for setting up distribution and

³ The Hong Kong Chilled Meat & Poultry Association is the major representative of the local chilled meat and poultry trade, with its members contributing about 80% of the chilled poultry supply in the local market.

storage facilities for chilled meat and poultry.

8. After extensive discussions, the Hong Kong Chilled Meat & Poultry Association submitted an application for planning permission to TPB in December 2020, proposing the use of a piece of land⁴ of about two hectares near Man Kam To Road as temporary storage and distribution facilities for chilled poultry. FHB coordinated with government departments concerned and provided policy support to this proposal. The planning application was approved with conditions by TPB in May 2021. The Association estimates that the facilities will be completed in around two years.

Advice sought

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

**Food and Health Bureau
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⁴ Over 90% is private land