

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

FHB(FE)095

Question Serial No.

0043

Head: 49 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department Subhead (No. & title):

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

It is stated that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue the laboratory analysis of the first Total Diet Study in Hong Kong to assess the risks of various food hazards in 2012-13. It has been recently reported that hamburger steak available in some fast food shops was suspected to have been treated with ammonia solution during food processing. In this connection, will the above laboratory analysis cover hamburger steak to safeguard public health effectively? If yes, in what ways will the laboratory results be released?

Asked by: Hon. IP LAU Suk-yee, Regina

Reply:

Ammonia solution (also known as ammonium hydroxide) is a food additive which can be used as an acidity regulator. The Joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations / World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives has previously evaluated the safety of ammonium hydroxide, and concluded that its normal use in food under conditions of good manufacturing practice does not pose a hazard to health.

Total Diet Study (TDS) has been recognised internationally as the most cost effective way to estimate dietary exposures to food chemicals or nutrients for a range of population groups and to assess the health risks of specific chemicals or nutrients. The Study covers more than 130 substances, including persistent organic pollutants, pesticide residues, metallic contaminants, processing contaminants and mycotoxins. Among the food samples taken for the first TDS, 12 samples of hamburger have been included. The whole study will be completed in 2014 and report findings will be released in phases.

As part of the daily routine to ensure food safety, the Centre for Food Safety assesses the impact of different food incidents identified through the food incident surveillance mechanism. Investigation and follow up actions are carried out when appropriate to ensure that food sold is fit for human consumption and comply with safety standards.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Clement LEUNG

Post Title _____ Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date _____ 29.2.2012

Session 18 FHB(FE)