

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

FHB(FE)115

Question Serial No.

0629

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:

The indicator for “samples taken from food animals for testing of veterinary drug residues” dropped from 54 291 in 2010 (Actual) to 52 595 in 2011 (Actual). Please advise on:

- (a) the reason(s) for the decrease in number, and whether this is related to a cutback in expenditure or manpower; if yes, the expenditure involved; and
- (b) whether the Department has considered the impact of lowering the indicator for “samples taken from food animals for testing of veterinary drug residues” on food safety, given that reports by the Centre for Food Safety indicated of the approximately 14 000 food samples it tested in the past year, five were found to be unsatisfactory, and one of which being a roasted duck sample from a supermarket was detected with residues of a prohibited veterinary drug, Chloramphenicol.

Asked by: Hon. PAN Pey-chyou

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows –

- (a) The drop in the number of samples taken from food animals for testing of veterinary drug residues in 2011 was due to a decrease in the number of live pigs slaughtered. There was no reduction in expenditure or manpower for taking such samples.
- (b) The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department adopts the World Health Organization's “from farm to table” strategy to ensure food safety in Hong Kong. Control at source includes allowing only the supply of food produced by approved farms/processing plants with audit inspections, and the requirements of health certificates for certain food animals and food products. At downstream stages of the food supply chain, CFS operates a Food Surveillance Programme to collect samples at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological, chemical (including veterinary drug residues in food) and radiological tests.

In line with the above strategy, CFS estimates that it will take 52 500 samples from food animals for testing of veterinary drug residues in 2012 which is comparable to 52 595 of 2011. Under the Food Surveillance Programme, CFS will take 65 000 food samples for testing in 2012, which is also comparable to 64 638 of 2011. Of the 65 000 food samples, 3 800 will be tested for veterinary drug residues, as compared with 3 771 of 2011.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Clement LEUNG

Post Title Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date 29.2.2012