

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 2990)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

The Department adopts a “risk-based” approach in conducting microbiological, chemical and radiological tests on food samples, with its food safety testing standards always kept updated. In recent years, however, food safety incidents were all first reported outside Hong Kong. Please advise under what conditions the Department will update its risk assessment and food safety testing standards.

Asked by: Hon WONG Yuk-man (Member Question No. 39)

Reply:

The Government adopts the World Health Organization (WHO)'s “from farm to table” strategy in safeguarding Hong Kong's food safety. The Food Surveillance Programme of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) monitors food on sale to ensure its compliance with the legal requirements and fitness for human consumption. CFS takes food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels (including online retailers) and adopts a risk-based approach in determining the types of samples to be collected, the frequency and number of samples taken for testing, and the types of laboratory analysis to be conducted. The sampling programme is under regular review by CFS, taking into account factors such as past food surveillance results, both local and overseas food incidents, and relevant risk analyses. Risk profiling is an ongoing process. If there are any food incidents which are of local relevance and with potential public health risk, CFS will take prompt follow-up measures to protect public health.

Regarding updating local food standards, CFS mainly makes reference to international food standards established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission¹, and scientific evaluations

¹ Codex Alimentarius Commission is an international body established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the WHO to develop food standards and guidelines for protecting the health of consumers and ensuring fair trade practices in the food trade.

performed by internationally recognised authorities, such as the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives, and the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues, in addition to local food consumption pattern.

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