

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)117

(Question Serial No. 1841)

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:

Given that hairy crab samples were detected with dioxins in 2016 and the progress of examination of imported hairy crabs fell short of public expectation last year, please advise whether the Government will set aside resources or draw up measures to ensure effective testing of seasonal food.

Every year, financial resources are earmarked for inspections of farms exporting food animals to Hong Kong. Does the scope of inspection cover aquaculture farms supplying aquatic products to Hong Kong? If yes, what is the expenditure involved? If no, will the Government consider conducting inspections to these aquaculture farms in future?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Han-pan (Member Question No. (LegCo use): 44)

Reply:

The testing of dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) involves very complicated process and high degree of precision, including extraction, multiple clean up steps, instrumental analysis and substantial data analysis. To ensure the accuracy of the analytical result, re-examination will have to be conducted as and when necessary. Besides, given that the analytical procedures require high precision work, the work has to be carried out by experienced laboratory personnel and designated laboratory with controlled environment. In view of the above, it normally takes about 2 to 4 weeks for the analysis of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs.

Given the seasonal and perishable nature of hairy crabs and with a view to facilitating trade operation, the Government Laboratory has flexibly deployed resources to compress the testing time to about 10 - 14 days in 2017. Also, importers generally followed the advice of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) to import a small quantity of hairy crabs initially for voluntary hold and test and order further quantities after the testing results were satisfactory.

CFS constantly reviews its food surveillance programme to ensure effective testing of food items, including hairy crabs and other seasonal food. The estimated expenditure for CFS'

food surveillance programme in 2018-19 is \$265 million. There is no separate breakdown by type of food items covered by the programme.

CFS inspects farms exporting food animals to Hong Kong each year, including aquatic food animal farms. The estimated expenditure for these inspections in 2018-2019 is \$1.3 million.

- End -