

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**FHB(FE)338****(Question Serial No. 5766)**Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene DepartmentSubhead (No. & title): (-) Not specifiedProgramme: (1) Food Safety and Public HealthControlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and HealthQuestion:

Information in the recent years shows that more than half of the fresh vegetables from the Mainland are directly imported by food importers without going through the Vegetable Marketing Organization (VMO) or the wholesale food markets operated by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD).

- a) Please list the major types of direct distribution channels, including supermarkets, wet markets, restaurants, food processing plants and caterers.
- b) Please provide the quantity of Mainland fresh vegetables supplied to Hong Kong via each of the above direct channel of distribution, and their respective shares of the total amount of fresh vegetables imported from the Mainland, in the past 5 years.

	Quantities of fresh vegetables imported from the Mainland (tonnes)					Respective shares of the total amount of fresh vegetables imported from the Mainland (%)				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Retail outlets of supermarkets										
Wet markets										
Restaurants										
Food processing plants										
Caterers										
Others Please specify: _____										
Total										

- c) Are vegetables from the above direct distribution channels sampled for testing to ensure compliance with the quality standards? If yes, please list the number of

sampling tests conducted in the past 5 years, and the number of cases of irregularities detected.

	Number of sampling tests on vegetables					Number of cases of irregularities				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Retail outlets of supermarkets										
Wet markets										
Restaurants										
Food processing plants										
Caterers										
Others Please specify: _____										
Total										

- d) Please provide the names of the 10 importers with the highest share of fresh vegetables imported from the Mainland in the past 5 years, and their respective quantities of import.

Names of importers	Respective quantities of fresh vegetables imported from the Mainland (tonnes)
2014	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
2015	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

2016	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
2017	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
2018	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

- e) What other measures are in place to control the quality of Mainland fresh vegetables not distributed through the VMO or the wholesale food markets of the AFCD?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (LegCo internal reference no.: 132)

Reply:

Hong Kong is a free market. All along, imported vegetables may either be distributed through wholesale markets (including the wholesale markets operated by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Cheung Sha Wan Vegetable Marketing Organization (VMO) or other private wholesalers) or sold directly at retail outlets (direct sale). According to the information from the Census and Statistics

Department, there were about 850 000 tonnes of imported vegetables in 2018. According to the information from AFCD, about 340 000 tonnes of vegetables were transacted through the wholesale markets operated by AFCD and the VMO in that year.

Whether vegetables are distributed through wholesalers is not relevant to safeguarding food safety. Wholesale markets primarily provide a trading platform for importers and retailers to facilitate business. All vegetables sold in Hong Kong for human consumption, regardless of whether the vegetables are distributed through the wholesale markets operated by AFCD or the VMO, are subject to local food safety regulatory mechanism.

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department takes samples of vegetables and their products at the import, wholesale and retail levels along a risk-based approach under its Food Surveillance Programme to safeguard food safety, regardless of whether the vegetables are distributed through wholesalers or are for direct sale. The numbers of samples of vegetables and their products taken for testing and the number of unsatisfactory samples from 2014 to 2018 are as follows –

Calendar year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Number of samples taken	21 694	24 537	24 462	23 677	23 952	118 322
Number of unsatisfactory samples	40	97	65	26	44	272

The overall satisfactory rate of vegetables and their products in the past 5 years was 99.8%. The unsatisfactory samples were detected to have pesticide residues, preservatives or metallic contamination, etc. exceeding the relevant food safety standards.

CFS does not have statistics on the quantities and distribution channels of fresh imported vegetables by food traders.

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