

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)339

(Question Serial No. 5769)

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:

At present, the Government imposes control on certain imported foods of higher risks. For example, the import of game, meat, poultry and eggs has to be accompanied by official health certificates issued by the issuing authorities of sources recognised by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

- (a) Will the Department conduct regular inspection to food production bases and food processing plants? If yes, what are the inspection criteria?
- (b) Further to the previous question, what was the number of inspections conducted over the past 3 years?
- (c) If regular inspections are carried out, will food items be sampled for testing during inspection? If yes, what kind of tests will be performed (e.g. tests for chemical substances and bacteria)? What is the number of samples taken? How many of them failed to meet the import standards?
- (d) Are there any standards and requirements for food packaging products, such as the regulatory requirements on food contact materials laid down by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the European Union?
- (e) In approving the import of high-risk foods, apart from an official health certificate issued by the issuing authority of the place of origin, will the Department also require the place of origin to provide:
 - (i) information on the ingredients of the livestock feed in use;
 - (ii) environmental assessment reports on the local conditions (including assessment reports on soil, water quality, water filtration systems and sewerage); and
 - (iii) a list of the antibiotics used by the farm concerned/employed locally (to ensure no non-compliant use of antibiotics by the farm/in the place of origin)?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (LegCo internal reference no.: 135)

Reply:

(a) to (c) The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) adopts a risk-based approach in conducting inspections of food processing plants outside Hong Kong, taking into account factors such as import volume, previous testing results and related food incidents. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, CFS inspected 54, 57 and 44 food processing plants outside Hong Kong respectively. CFS does not take samples during these inspections, but collects samples of food at the import, wholesale and retail levels along a risk-based approach to safeguard food safety.

(d) The Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) (the Ordinance) stipulates that any food for sale for human consumption in Hong Kong must be fit for human consumption. It is an offence to sell food which is unfit for human consumption due to contamination by food contact materials.

(e) CFS implements the import control of certain foods of higher risks in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the subsidiary legislation under the Ordinance. Specifically, imports of milk, milk beverages and frozen confections require the prior permissions of the Department, whereas imports of game, meat, poultry and eggs have to be accompanied with official health certificates issued by the issuing authorities of sources recognised by the Department.

- End -