

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 5770)

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 Department only puts in place a mechanism requiring food manufacturers to provide food examination reports for each consignment of high-risk foods imported into Hong Kong. In future, will the Department consider making it a mandatory requirement to submit examination reports in respect of all imported packaged foods? If yes, what is the estimated expenditure? If no, are there any other measures to step up safety control of imported foods?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (LegCo internal reference no.: 136)

Reply:

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. Subsidiary legislation under the Ordinance regulates the imports of certain foods of higher risk, such as game, meat, poultry, eggs, milk, milk beverages and frozen confections. Imports of milk, milk beverages and frozen confections require the prior permissions of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (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.

To safeguard food safety, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Department takes food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing under a risk-based approach, and takes appropriate follow-up actions regarding any unsatisfactory testing results, including tracing the food sources, advising vendors to stop selling and dispose of the implicated foods, and instituting prosecutions where there is sufficient evidence. In 2018, about 66 000 food samples were taken for testing, of which the overall satisfactory rate was 99.8%. CFS will continue to keep in view the international developments and measures relating to safeguarding food safety and optimise its food safety work on an ongoing basis.

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