

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)410**

**(Question Serial No. 6150)**

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:

With regard to genetically modified (GM) food, please advise this Committee:

- (1) whether the Department plans to develop an official certification scheme for GM food. If yes, please provide the timetable, details of work and estimated expenditure; if no, the reason(s).
- (2) whether the Government had conducted sample testing or examination on GM food over the past 5 years. Please provide tabulated information on the sample size, the places of origin of the food items concerned, their food types and the test results.
- (3) whether the Government has statistics on the number of cases requiring medication or hospital admission due to discomfort after consumption of GM food over the past 5 year. If yes, please provide the figures and details.
- (4) details of the Department's work plan on GM food and the estimated expenditure in 2019-20.
- (5) whether the Department has made reference to overseas studies on GM food legislation. If yes, please provide the details.
- (6) whether the Department has conducted market surveys on GM food available for sale in Hong Kong. If yes, please provide the details; if no, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki (LegCo internal reference no.: 73)

Reply:

According to the World Health Organization, genetically modified (GM) food currently available on the international market has passed the safety assessments of the respective food safety regulatory authorities and is not likely to be harmful to human health.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission considers that governments of different economies may make their own decisions on whether or not to label GM food, and has formulated guidance on the risk assessment and labelling of GM food.

All food for sale in Hong Kong for human consumption (including GM food) must comply with the same set of statutory standards on safety, quality and labelling to ensure that it is fit for human consumption. Like any other food, GM food is covered in the Food Surveillance Programme of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. CFS takes food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels and adopts a risk-based principle in determining the types of samples to be collected, the frequency and number of samples taken for testing, and types of laboratory analysis to be conducted. CFS releases the test results to the public through various channels. CFS does not have a breakdown on the number of food samples on GM food.

The Government encourages the trade to adopt GM food labelling on a voluntary basis. CFS has issued the “Guidelines on Voluntary Labelling of Genetically Modified Food” which set out the principles on labelling of GM food, and provide reference for the trade to give accurate and user-friendly information on the GM food labels. CFS will continue to promote the voluntary labelling regime to traders and provide the public with information on GM food, while keeping in view international development in GM technology and GM food labelling standards with a view to coming up with a proposal on a pre-market safety assessment scheme for GM food for public consultation in due course. CFS is making use of its existing manpower and resources to carry out work relating to GM food.

CFS has not received any report of food poisoning related to GM food in the last 5 years.

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