

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**FHB(FE)411****(Question Serial No. 6151)**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:

On monitoring online sale of food,

- (1) has the Government conducted sampling tests on food available for sale online over the past 5 years? Please provide tabulated information on the sample size, the ways of purchase, the places of origin of the food items concerned, their food types and the test results.
- (2) please provide the number of inspections conducted on food suppliers or in food factories in each of the past 5 years.
- (3) please provide the number of cases of irregularities detected, summons issued, prosecutions instituted and cases convicted over the past 5 years.
- (4) what are the details of the Department's work plan on "online sale of food"? What are the estimated expenditure and manpower involved?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki (LegCo internal reference no.: 74)Reply:

- (1) The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) takes samples of locally produced and imported food sold online for testing through purchasing directly from various websites and online platforms along a risk-based approach under its Food Surveillance Programme (FSP). The numbers of food samples purchased online from 2014 to 2018 are as follows -

Calendar year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Number of food samples purchased online	0	1 502	4 053	4 091	4 164	13 810

The testing results of all, except 9, of the aforementioned food samples were satisfactory. Of the unsatisfactory samples, 4 were aquatic products, 4 were vegetable, fruit or cereal grain products and 1 was meat product. Those 9 unsatisfactory samples were detected to have metallic contamination, pesticide residues or preservatives, etc. exceeding the relevant food safety standards.

- (2) The numbers of inspections of food premises conducted by the Department in the past 5 years are as follows –

Calendar year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of inspections	238 812	239 301	247 422	248 452	230 254

We do not have breakdown on the numbers of inspections with respect to food suppliers for online food sale specifically.

- (3) The numbers of prosecutions and convictions against unlicensed food businesses in connection with online food sale in the past 5 years are as follows –

Calendar year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of prosecutions	9	24	26	36	68
Number of convictions	9	24	25	34	59 ^{Note}

^{Note} The figure reflects the position as at 31 March 2019. Hearing results of the remaining 9 out of the 68 prosecutions instituted in 2018 are pending.

- (4) The Department has been closely monitoring online food sale activities, including online traders that are not involved in food production and do not have physical premises. If the Department suspects that any online food sale activity involves unlicensed business, or has doubts on the source and safety of the food concerned, it will conduct investigations, including decoy operations to collect evidence and information, and take appropriate actions. CFS has increased the proportion of online food samples for microbiological testing under its FSP in 2019. We do not have breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in this area of work.

- End -