

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**FHB(FE)310****(Question Serial No. 4566)**

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:

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 in tabular form 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 places of food production 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.: 147)

Reply:

- (1) The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department takes samples of locally produced and imported food products for testing through purchasing directly from various websites and online platforms having regard to the risk-based principle under its Food Surveillance Programme. CFS collected a total of 18 691 online food samples from 2015 to 2019. The figures, with a breakdown by year, are as follows:

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of online food samples	1 502	4 053	4 091	4 164	4 881

The testing results of all, except 16, of the aforementioned samples were satisfactory. Of the unsatisfactory samples, 9 were aquatic products, 5 were vegetables, fruits and cereal grain products, 1 was a meat product and 1 was honey. The unsatisfactory samples were detected to have metallic contamination, pesticide residues or preservatives exceeding the relevant safety standards.

- (2) The number of inspections of food premises conducted by the Department in the past 5 calendar years is as follows:

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of inspections	239 301	247 422	248 452	230 254	225 944

We do not have a breakdown on the number of inspections conducted on food suppliers with respect to online food sale.

- (3) The numbers of prosecutions and convictions against unlicensed online food sale in the past 5 calendar years are as follows:

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of prosecutions	24	26	36	68	38
Number of convictions	24	25	34	67 ^{Note}	28 ^{Note}

^{Note} As at 31 March 2020, hearing results of 1 prosecution instituted in 2018 and 10 prosecutions instituted in 2019 are pending.

- (4) The Department has been closely monitoring online food sale, including keeping an eye on online food traders that are not involved in food production and do not have physical premises. If the Department suspects that an online food sale activity involves unlicensed business operation or has doubts about the source and safety of the food concerned, it will conduct investigations, including mounting decoy operations to collect evidence and information, and take appropriate actions. Moreover, health inspectors of the Food Surveillance Unit and the Food Labelling Unit of CFS will continue to take samples of food put up for sale online. These 2 units, which also undertake other duties, have an establishment of 40 staff members. Their estimated staff cost is \$26.88 million in 2020-21.

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