

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)311**

**(Question Serial No. 4567)**

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 has 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 years. If yes, please provide the figures and details.
- (4) of the details of the Department's work plan on GM food and the estimated expenditure in 2020-21.
- (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, the details; if no, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon KWOK Ka-ki (LegCo internal reference no.: 148)

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. In addition, the Codex Alimentarius Commission considers that governments of different places may make their own decisions on whether or not to label GM food.

All food products 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 of food and are covered by the Food Surveillance Programme of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. CFS adopts a risk-based principle in taking food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing to ensure food safety. CFS does not have a breakdown on the number of GM food samples collected. In the past 5 years, CFS has not received any report of food poisoning in relation to GM food.

Besides, 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 keep in view international development in GM technology and food labelling standards to formulate policies in a timely manner. CFS will make use of its existing manpower and resources to carry out the above work.

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