

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY****FHB(FE)077****(Question Serial No. 1949)**

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 Diane WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Regarding online food sale, please advise this Committee of the following information for the past 3 years:

1. How many tests were conducted on food sold online by the Department each year?
2. An earlier study of the Consumer Council found that over 90% of deliveries of frozen and perishable foods brought to the door were not in a fresh state as the food surface temperature was too high. Has the Government conducted investigations and taken enforcement actions in this regard? If yes, please provide the details.
3. Further to the above, please provide a breakdown of the number of cases with unsatisfactory test results, the number of prosecutions instituted and the number of convictions recorded.
4. Please provide a breakdown of the manpower deployed for the above work each year.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hak-kan (LegCo internal reference no.: 60)

Reply:

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department takes samples of food purchased from websites and online platforms for testing in accordance with a risk-based principle under the Food Surveillance Programme. The number of samples taken for testing in each year from 2018 to 2020 is as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number of food samples purchased online</b>	4 164	4 881	4 602	13 647

The testing results of all, except 27, of the aforementioned samples were satisfactory. The unsatisfactory samples consisted of 11 aquatic products, 10 vegetable, fruit or cereal grain products, 2 samples of meat/meat products and 4 samples of other foods (including honey, syrup, candy and spice). They were detected with metallic contaminants,

pesticide/veterinary drug residues, preservatives, colouring matters or pathogens exceeding the respective safety standards. The CFS has taken appropriate follow-up actions regarding these samples. The work includes instructing vendors to stop selling the implicated foods, requesting importers/distributors to recall the food items as needed and instituting prosecution against 3 cases, with 1 case convicted and 2 other cases pending a judgement.

In addition, the Department conducted 160 test purchases in 2020 on vendors with permits for online sale of restricted foods with measurement of food temperature. No food was found to be held at an improper temperature when delivered to the door. The Department will continue to closely monitor online food sale activities and investigate suspected non-compliant cases, including conducting decoy operations to collect evidence and information, so as to take appropriate actions.

The Food Surveillance Unit and the Food Labelling Unit of the CFS are responsible for collecting samples of food purchased from various websites and online platforms for testing. The 2 units are also tasked with other duties. There was an establishment of 40 staff members for the related work in the past 3 years. As for monitoring of the operation of vendors with permits for online sale of restricted foods, such as the conduct of test purchases, it is performed by the District Environmental Hygiene Offices of the Department, which also undertake other duties in maintaining environmental hygiene. We do not have a separate breakdown on the manpower involved in the aforesaid monitoring work.

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