

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)023

(Question Serial No. 0186)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

It is stated that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue to re-engineer the workflow, and revamp and develop new information technology (IT) systems for the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) for more effective management of data in food import and food safety incidents in 2022-23. Please provide details on these incentives, including the workflow of the CFS involved and the inadequacies of the existing IT systems.

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-fai (LegCo internal reference no.: 1)

Reply:

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department set up a dedicated team at the end of 2017 to fully review its operational workflow, with a view to revamping and developing new information technology (IT) systems based on the re-engineered operational workflow for higher efficiency, such as facilitating the trade in registration and application, streamlining the workflow of the CFS and reinforcing its capability in surveillance and incident management.

The IT system works are being rolled out. Launched in phases beginning at the end of 2019, the Food Trader Portal (FTP) has become a platform for electronic communication between the CFS and the trade. The import-related functions of the FTP were fully implemented in late May 2021, putting into practice the use of IT to strengthen import control of the food concerned. Food importers or distributors can make use of the online platform to complete and renew their registrations, apply for import licences or import permissions of meat, poultry, game, eggs, milk and frozen confections, and report arrivals of consignments of foods under import control via electronic means. The applicants are no longer required to send their staff to the CFS to deal with these matters in person. Through access to the online system, they can also check their application status and records of past applications. Likewise, applications for import licence for import of meat and poultry by air and chilled meat and poultry by land can be made online. The time required for processing such applications can usually be shortened to a few hours. Currently, more than 92% of import licences and import permissions are applied for and issued through the FTP.

The CFS is expected to launch a new Food Import and Export Control System in 2022 to support various aspects of the workflow of import and export control and the issue of supporting documents for import and export of food. The new system will be equipped with automated functions, such as verification of the information declared in applications for import licences, random selection of food consignments for physical inspection, and verification of the information about arrival of food consignments in Hong Kong. The CFS will also construct a new Food Incident Management System and revamp the existing Food Surveillance System.

The above systems are expected to interface with each other in the first quarter of 2024 to form a complete information network in enhancing the CFS's capability in food import control, surveillance and traceability.

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