

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)029**

**(Question Serial No. 0768)**

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:

In this Programme, it is stated that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will conduct risk assessment on food and provide timely information to the public. In this connection, please provide the following information:

1. the number of cases in which beta-agonists (including ractopamine) were detected by the Department in the samples taken from food animals for testing of veterinary drug residues in each of the past 2 years;
2. further to the above, the reason(s) for the decrease in the number of samples to be taken in the coming year as compared to that in 2020;
3. the quantity of imported meat products tested in the past 2 years and whether such testing covered beta-agonists (including ractopamine);
4. whether the Department has, to ensure safety, stepped up the testing of food of which the places of origin have food safety risks (e.g. possible presence of beta-agonist residues in food and non-staple food). If yes, the details; if no, the reason(s); and
5. the manpower involved for the Centre for Food Safety in the coming year and the estimated number of tests to be conducted on prepackaged food and non-staple meat products.

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piu (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

In 2020 and 2021, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department collected 32 208 and 30 131 samples (including urine and tissues) respectively from food animals in slaughterhouses for testing of veterinary drug residues under the Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Chemical Residues) Regulation (Cap. 139N). No irregularities related to the beta-agonists regulated under the Regulation (i.e. clenbuterol and salbutamol) were found. In 2022, the estimated number of samples to be collected from food animals

for testing under the Regulation is 30 000, which is about the same as the actual number of samples in 2021.

Pursuant to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) and its subsidiary legislation, the CFS collects samples of food from different places of origin at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing according to a risk-based principle under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. In 2020 and 2021, 186 and 293 samples of pork, beef and related products were tested for beta-agonists (including ractopamine) respectively. All samples passed the tests. The CFS will continue to closely monitor the food surveillance results, food incidents in Hong Kong and other places and relevant risk analyses to step up the testing of high-risk foods.

The CFS will have an estimated establishment of about 800 civil service posts in 2022-23. The staff concerned will undertake different aspects of food safety work, including import control, food surveillance, risk assessment and risk communication. In 2022, the estimated number of food samples taken for testing to be collected by the CFS for testing is about 65 500.

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