

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)065

(Question Serial No. 1835)

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 Environment and Ecology

Question:

Regarding permits for online sale of restricted food, please advise this Committee of:

1. the respective numbers of applications and approved applications for a permit for online sale of restricted food in each of the past 3 years;
2. the number of random checks conducted on vendors with permits for online sale of restricted food in each of the past 3 years;
3. the number of detected cases of irregularities such as excessive bacterial count in restricted food sold by vendors with permits for online sale of restricted food in each of the past 3 years; and
4. the number of non-compliance cases involving selling of specified restricted foods without a permit for online sale of restricted food in each of the past 3 years.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hoi-yan (LegCo internal reference no.: 24)

Reply:

Under the Food Business Regulation (Cap.132X) and the relevant legislation, any person who sells the restricted foods specified in Schedule 2 of the Food Business Regulation (e.g. sashimi, sushi), including selling them online, shall obtain a relevant restricted food permit. For sale or offer for sale of restricted food only through a website or an online platform account, a Restricted Food Permit (Online Sale of Restricted Food) is required.

1. The respective numbers of applications and approved applications for a Restricted Food Permit (Online Sale of Restricted Food) in each of the past 3 years are as follows:

	2020	2021	2022
Number of applications received	997	1 403	748
Number of permits issued	471	1 041	621

2. The regulatory work carried out by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in relation to vendors with permits in the past 3 years is as follows:

	2020	2021	2022
Number of inspections of premises with permits	1 170	2 264	4 007
Number of checks on the information shown on the relevant websites or online platforms	1 194	2 363	4 459
Number of test purchases of restricted food conducted to check compliance with requirements	160	298	246

3. In the past 3 years, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Department took about 17 200 samples of food purchased online through various channels (including online shops and websites and mobile apps of shops with physical premises) for chemical and microbiological tests under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. However, CFS does not keep a breakdown of the number of samples taken from vendors with Restricted Food Permit (Online Sale of Restricted Food). Apart from 40 of the samples taken, the test results of the remaining samples were all satisfactory. The overall satisfaction rate was 99.8%. CFS has taken appropriate follow-up actions regarding the unsatisfactory samples, including instructing the vendors to stop selling the foods, requesting the importers/distributors to recall and dispose of the implicated foods, and making public announcements.
4. The numbers of prosecutions instituted by the Department for the sale of restricted food without a permit in the past 3 years are as follows:

	2020	2021	2022
Number of prosecutions	39	61	62

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