

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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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:

In 2023-24, the Government will continue to re-engineer workflow, overhaul and develop new information technology systems for the Centre for Food Safety for more effective management of data in food import and food safety incidents. Please provide the details, including the progress and effectiveness of the re-engineering work, the information technology systems involved, the specific targets of enhancement and optimisation, and the manpower and expenditure required over the years.

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (LegCo internal reference no.: 15)

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 existing information technology (IT) systems and developing new ones based on the re-engineered operational workflow for higher efficiency, such as facilitating the trade in various registration and application procedures, streamlining the workflow of CFS and reinforcing its capability in surveillance and incident management.

The IT system works have been rolled out progressively. Launched in phases beginning at the end of 2019, the Food Trader Portal (FTP) has become a platform for electronic communication between CFS and the trade. The import-related functions of the FTP were fully implemented in May 2021, putting into practice the use of IT to facilitate the trade and 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 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 licences 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.

In March 2022, CFS launched a new Food Incident Management System to strengthen its effectiveness in recording and tracing the actions taken in food incidents and to enhance its monitoring of the progress of follow-up actions. In November 2022, CFS launched a new Food Import and Export Control System to support the workflow of import and export control and the issue of supporting documents for import and export of food. The system is 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. In January 2023, CFS finished revamping the Food Surveillance System, which helps increase its capability in food surveillance.

CFS is engaging in the interface of the above systems to enable them to form a complete information network for enhancing CFS's capability in food import control, surveillance and traceability. The above work is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.

The dedicated team in charge of the above work will have 71 staff at an estimated staffing expenditure of about \$68.33 million in 2023-24.

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