

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)052

(Question Serial No. 0643)

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:

The number of food complaints handled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department increased substantially by over 2 000 cases to more than 6 900 cases in 2023. Please advise this Committee of:

- i. the number of food complaint cases handled by the Department in the past 5 years (with a breakdown by type of complaints);
- ii. the main reason(s) for the substantial increase in the complaints handled in 2023 and the major type(s) of complaint involved; and
- iii. the number of cases in relation to online sale and electronic delivery platforms among the aforesaid food complaint cases, and the major categories of complaints involved.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hoi-yau (LegCo internal reference no.: 16)

Reply:

- i. The numbers of food complaint cases handled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in the past 5 years (2019 to 2023) are tabulated as follows:

Type of complaints	Number				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Unwholesome food	2 354	1 878	2 055	1 679	2 937
Excreta/body parts of animals or insects in food	764	710	937	909	1 101
Foreign substances in food	464	405	705	726	875
Deteriorated food	448	370	495	426	613
Mouldy food	130	109	154	151	191
Chemicals in food	150	121	127	80	101
Fake/counterfeit food	20	17	13	15	20
Food labels	356	220	322	228	259
Sale of food beyond the expiry date	199	71	86	78	92
Packaging of food	13	8	13	21	17
Adulteration of food	7	1	10	2	1

Type of complaints	Number				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Inadequately cooked food	120	85	132	151	236
Improper handling of food	31	29	37	19	22
Improper storage of food	11	13	18	11	18
Others	59	55	156	338	420
Total	5 126	4 092	5 260	4 834	6 903

- ii. In 2023, the Department handled a total of 6 903 food complaints, which were mainly related to unwholesome food, excreta/body parts of animals or insects in food and foreign substances in food. It is believed that the increase in food complaint cases in the year was partly attributable to more frequent eating out by members of the public and their enhanced food safety awareness after the relaxation of the anti-epidemic measures in Hong Kong.
- iii. Of the food complaint cases handled by the Department from 2019 to 2023, 3.48% were related to online sale and electronic delivery platforms. These complaints mainly involved unwholesome food, excreta/body parts of animals or insects in food and foreign substances in food. The details are set out as follows:

Type of complaints involving online sale and electronic delivery platforms	Number				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Unwholesome food	9	28	48	60	84
Excreta/body parts of animals or insects in food	5	27	84	87	67
Foreign substances in food	5	15	56	33	38
Deteriorated food	9	13	22	33	30
Mouldy food	4	2	11	12	7
Chemicals in food	0	0	1	3	3
Fake/counterfeit food	0	0	0	1	0
Food labels	4	5	17	16	15
Sale of food beyond the expiry date	3	1	9	4	3
Packaging of food	0	1	0	1	2
Adulteration of food	0	0	0	0	0
Inadequately cooked food	0	3	3	8	9
Improper handling of food	0	1	0	1	1
Improper storage of food	0	0	1	1	0
Others	1	0	0	4	1
Total	40	96	252	264	260
Percentage out of the total number of food complaints	0.78%	2.35%	4.79%	5.46%	3.77%

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