

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene**

**The Centre for Food Safety's Public Education and Publicity Efforts  
in Promoting Food Safety**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to brief Members on the Centre for Food Safety's public education and publicity efforts in promoting food safety.

**Background**

2. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) recognises the prominent role of public education and publicity in promoting food safety and has developed different education and publicity programmes for different sectors, including the general public and consumers at large, the trade and students. Some of CFS' programmes are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

**Education and publicity programmes targeting the general public**

3. CFS believes that through exposure to clear and understandable food safety information, members of the public will be in a better position to help ensure food safety and to make informed choices for themselves. CFS provides the necessary information to the consumers through various channels, and regularly enhances the contents and modes of delivery to improve effectiveness.

*Delivery of food safety information through various channels*

4. Since its establishment in 2006, CFS has been conducting public education on different food safety issues through various channels, such as CFS website, Facebook, e-mails, media briefings, pamphlets, seminars, workshops and talks. Every year, Announcements in the

Public Interest (API) carrying different food safety messages are produced and broadcast on television and radio. CFS also contributes articles to local newspaper columns to explain important food safety related concepts.

#### *CFS Website, Facebook and Food Safety Mobile App*

5. In addition to widely-accepted traditional mass communication channels like TV, radio and newspaper, CFS has been developing different communication avenues to extend its reach and promote speedy and interactive exchanges. The CFS website provides the latest and credible food safety information. Information available ranges from food safety tips, food alerts, food surveillance results, and “risk-in-brief” to more in-depth information such as risk assessment reports.

6. In light of the growing popularity of social media as a means of communication, especially amongst the younger population, CFS launched its own Facebook page in October 2013 as an additional channel to disseminate important information quickly and directly. Since its launching, the number of “like” received from Facebook users has been increasing steadily. Currently, we have more than 1,100 “likes”.

7. Moreover, CFS launched the “Food Safety” mobile application (app) in April 2014. With this new information platform, members of the public can obtain the latest information on food safety via mobile devices. On top of receiving notifications of food safety news and alerts, the public can use the “Food Safety” app to search for food safety information and advice that are of interest to them, download publications to create their own archive, and read various topical food safety issues. Since its launching, there have been more than 1,700 downloads. We would step up our publicity efforts to promote food safety through the social media.

#### *Food Safety Focus and other publications*

8. Food Safety Focus is a monthly electronic publication which aims to attract readers who are interested in gaining more in-depth understanding of food safety issues and recent topics of concern. The Food Safety Focus has on average more than 5,000 hit-rates for each issue. Other publications such as Food Safety Bulletin, Food Safety Express and GM Food Newsletter are also published on a regular basis, targeting both the public and food trade. Moreover, CFS maintains a

wide range of resource materials available to the public, including guidelines, pamphlets, posters and exhibition boards.

#### *Food Safety Day and related activities*

9. To enhance public awareness of food safety, the Food Safety Day is organised every year. The Food Safety Day is usually associated with a key theme or message on food safety. For example, the theme of the Food Safety Day 2014 is “Safe and Smart Ways to Cook”, which aims to promote safe and healthy cooking methods. The Food Safety Day also kick-starts a series of territory-wide activities, including seminars and roving exhibitions, to disseminate messages on food safety to both the public and food trade.

#### *Communication Resource Unit*

10. Staffed by experienced health inspectors, the Communication Resource Unit’s (CRU) under CFS has made available a collection of local and international resource materials on food safety for the reference of members of the public. Located in Mong Kok, CRU provides a convenient venue for holding seminars and talks for members of the public. Videos, exhibition boards and other education materials (e.g. teaching kits) are also available on loan to the public.

#### *Consumer Liaison Group*

11. The Consumer Liaison Group (CLG) provides a specific platform to enhance communication with consumers on various food safety issues. Members are openly recruited, including through placing advertisement in the Choice magazine. There are currently 380 members and their term of membership lasts for 3 years, from 2012 to 2015. The CLG meetings aim to collect views and comments from members, and to understand the knowledge, beliefs and risk perception from the public’s and consumer’s point of view on various food safety issues in order to tailor risk communication messages to meet their needs. CLG meetings are usually conducted in the format of focus group meetings at about three to four times per year. In-depth opinions can be collected from the members through these meetings.

#### **Education and publicity programmes targeting the trade**

12. While the Government is obliged to protect consumers from food

safety risks, the trade has a primary role in ensuring that the food they produce and sell is safe. CFS recognises that the trade must be equipped with the relevant knowledge and be held accountable for the safety of the food they supply.

#### *Food Safety Seminar and other workshops*

13. CFS organises series of workshops and talks on various food safety topics for the trade every year. For example, CFS organises workshops on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)<sup>1</sup> to publicise proper food handling to employees of food business and promote the adoption of HACCP System / Food Safety Plan in order to enhance food safety. More than 30 HACCP seminars/workshops were held in 2013.

14. Recently, in response to the World Health Organization Western Pacific Regional Food Safety Strategy 2011-2015, CFS organises a series of food safety talks on high-risk food. The objective is to enhance food safety training and education for food handlers engaged in handling high-risk food such as sushi, sashimi and raw oyster. Talks will be arranged in all districts in Hong Kong in 2014/15. Eight talks have been conducted so far.

15. Apart from regular seminars and talks, CFS also organises larger scale Food Safety Seminars for the trade. Usually held biennially, the seminar provides a platform for interactive exchange of information and views on current and important food safety issues (e.g. the latest regulatory requirements in Hong Kong and new food safety initiatives by CFS) between the Government and food trade. It is envisaged that through these seminars, the culture of continuous improvement and collaboration in food safety control can be further enhanced among the local food trade.

#### *Food Safety Charter*

16. Food Safety Charter is a scheme jointly developed by CFS and the food trade. Upon signing the Food Safety Charter, food trade associations and restaurants are committed to disseminating various food

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<sup>1</sup> HACCP system is a scientific and systematic approach to identify, assess and control of hazards in the food production process. With the HACCP system, food safety control is integrated into the design of the process rather than relied on end-product testing. Therefore HACCP system provides a preventive and thus cost-effective approach in food safety.

safety messages to their staff, members and customers, as well as to set a good example for the trade in upholding the food safety standard. Currently, 23 food trade associations and over 1 700 food premises are signatories to the Charter.

#### *Trade Consultation Forum*

17. To strengthen collaboration with the food trade and enhance food safety, CFS regularly conducts Trade Consultation Forum. The forum provides a platform for CFS to exchange views on various food safety matters with the trade and to collect their views and comments on food safety control measures as well as risk communication activities. Participants of the forum include various food trade associations, food manufacturers, importers, wholesalers, supermarket operators and retailers. About five forums are conducted each year, and in 2013, each forum was attended by 60 to 86 trade representatives.

#### **Education and publicity programmes targeting the students**

18. CFS understands that education on food safety should start early in childhood and thus places special emphasis on developing partnership with schools.

#### *School talks on various food safety topics*

19. CFS regularly contacts primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong to arrange school talks on various food safety topics, including basic food safety principles, nutrition labelling and genetically modified food. Other food safety topics of interest could also be arranged upon request from schools. Seventy talks were organised for primary and secondary schools in 2013.

#### *Other collaborative programmes with schools*

20. Besides traditional school talks and seminars, CFS also encourages students to take a more active role in the education programmes. For example, in the “Live it, Use it” Nutrition Labelling Promotion Award Scheme, students are encouraged to organise promotional activities in school and community settings so as to gain a better understanding of nutrition labelling.

21. This year, to enhance students’ understanding of nutrition labelling

and food safety, CFS has organised a Secondary School Food Safety and Nutrition Labelling Quiz Competition. The activity aims to help students develop safe food handling practices and healthy eating habits at an early stage of life. More than 450 students from 47 schools have participated in the competition.

### **Highlights of CFS' future efforts in public education and publicity**

22. In the coming years, apart from continuing our efforts in promoting food safety, CFS will also place more emphasis on the promotion of healthy food production and healthy eating. CFS has previously issued two trade guidelines on reducing sodium, sugars and fats in foods. In the future, CFS will further explore the feasibility of collaboration with the food trade and other stakeholders in reducing sodium and sugars in foods. In addition, CFS will explore the use of other communication strategies such as social marketing in influencing consumer behaviour and making healthier food choices.

### **Conclusion**

23. CFS recognises the importance of public education and publicity programmes in promoting food safety. We will continue the public education and publicity efforts so that the food trade and members of the public will be better informed and equipped with food safety knowledge.

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