

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of the 59th Meeting
held at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday, 23 June 2015,
at Room 1801, 18/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong.**

Prof Lo Yuk-lam	(Chairman)
Dr Felix CHAN Hon-wai, JP	Mr CHAN Wai-ming, MH, JP
Mr Abraham CHAN Yu-ling	Prof CHIU Siu-wai
Mrs Jenny LAM WEN Mei-fong	Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwok-keung
Mrs Sandra MAK WONG Siu-chun	Mr Simon TAM Hop-sing
Prof WONG Wing-tak	Prof Samuel WONG Yeung-shan
Mrs Cherry TSE LING Kit-ching, JP	Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)
Miss Vivian LAU Lee-kwan, JP	Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung	Assistant Director (Inspection & Quarantine), Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Dr Eddy NG Kwok-po	Principal Medical and Health Officer (Non-Communicable Disease)
Miss Hinny LAM Shuk-ye	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) ³ (Secretary to ACFEH)

Absent with Apologies

Dr Doris AU Wai-ting

Mrs Vivien CHEN CHOU Mei-mei

Dr CHUNG Shan-shan

Ms Josephine KEA Chi-shun

Prof Kenneth LEUNG Mei-ye

Dr Leo POON Lit-man

In Attendance

Food and Health Bureau (FHB)

Mr Christopher WONG Kwok-bun, JP Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Mr Kenneth CHAN Siu-yum Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2 (Acting)

Miss Diane WONG Shuk-han Principal Assistant Secretary (Food)2

Mr Ricky CHENG Wing-kei Assistant Secretary (Food)2

Dr Steven YEUNG Kin-wai Assistant Secretary (Food)SD2

Mr Desmond WONG Chi-hang Assistant Secretary (Food)4

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)

Dr Gloria TAM Lai-fan, JP Controller, Centre for Food Safety

Dr HO Yuk-yin, JP Consultant(Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication)

Dr LEE Siu-yuen, JP Assistant Director (Food Surveillance & Control)

Dr Raymond HO Lei-ming Principal Medical Officer (Risk Management)

Dr Allen CHAN Sze-ling Senior Veterinary Officer (Veterinary Public Health)

Mr LAI Chun-kwong Senior Superintendent (Operations)3

Opening Remarks

1. The Chairman welcomed all members to the first meeting of the new term from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2017.

Agenda Item 1: Confirmation of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

2. The minutes were confirmed without amendments.

Agenda Item 2: Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Proposed Arrangements for Allocation of New Public Niches (ACFEH Paper No. 4/2015) - Confidential Item

4. The discussions are kept in strict confidence.

Agenda Item 4: Statutory Control on Import of Eggs (ACFEH paper No. 5/2015)

5. Dr LEE Siu-yuen introduced the paper. Mr Kenneth CHAN supplemented that this legislative exercise involved three amendment regulations, subject to negative vetting by LegCo. A LegCo subcommittee was formed to scrutinize the amendment regulations. The scrutiny period was scheduled to end on 8 July. [Post-meeting note: It was extended to the first LegCo meeting in the 2015/16 legislative session, i.e. 14 October. The LegCo subcommittee has completed its scrutiny of the amendment regulations, which would come into force on 5 December.]

6. Mr Stephen LEUNG asked whether the six-month grace period for the industry was too short in case LegCo vetoed the proposed legislative amendments.

7. Mr Kenneth CHAN replied that the trade had been briefed and consulted since 2010. The six-month grace period aimed to allow preparation time for the trade to comply with the new regulatory requirements.

8. The Chairman enquired whether there were any international hygiene standards for poultry eggs and how the importation control would operate. Dr LEE Siu-yuen advised that FEHD would make reference to the recommendations of the World Organisation for Animal Health and would review the control and surveillance system of the exporting authorities before entering into an import protocol with them. The control regime would be similar to the existing regime for importation of meat and poultry whereby every consignment had to be accompanied with a health certificate issued by the relevant issuing entity.

9. Mr CHAN Wai-ming commented that food safety was of utmost importance and he agreed that statutory control should be imposed on imports of eggs.

Agenda Item 5 : Safety Control on Japanese Food (ACFEH Paper No. 6/2015)

10. Dr. Raymond HO introduced the paper.

11. Mr Stephen LEUNG asked about the economic implication of the safety control on Japanese food by the Centre of Food Safety (CFS). Dr Raymond HO said that the control system was imposed having regard to science-based risk assessment. But he noted that some economies had been relaxing the restriction on Japanese food while some others retained stringent control. Mrs Cherry TSE supplemented that, given the openness of Hong Kong's economy and our diverse sources of imports, the aggregate economic implications of the current safety control on Japanese food were minimal; what was at stake was an allocative one – imports from other sources could have displaced Japanese produce. . As a corollary, traders involved in trading Japanese food might suffer from the reduced trade volume while traders of food from other sources might benefit because of substitution effect.

12. Mrs Jenny LAM agreed to the safety control of Japanese food imposed by CFS as Hong Kong was the top export destination of Japanese food. Mr Simon TAM concurred that the continued surveillance of Japanese food would help enhance public's confidence.

13. Prof Samuel WONG noted that South Korea imposed a total ban of fishery product from the five prefectures of Japan and he asked if we knew the considerations behind. Dr Raymond HO replied that the total ban was based on

the scientific evidence collected by the relevant authority of South Korea as it was geographically closer to Japan. But we could not speculate if there would be other considerations.

14. Mrs Cherry TSE commented that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had been monitoring the Fukushima nuclear power station incident and following up the implications closely. Recent IAEA reports revealed concerns over the persistent underground water ingress to main buildings and the accumulation of contaminated water on-site; the long-term management of radioactive waste; as well as those related to the removal of nuclear fuel, damaged fuel and fuel debris. As shown in the ACFEH paper No.6/2015, CFS took its role as the gatekeeper of food safety in Hong Kong seriously.

15. In response to the Chairman's enquiry on whether Hong Kong adopted a more stringent standard than Codex, Dr Raymond HO replied that CFS considered the existing control measures adequate as there was a decreasing trend of detecting low radiation level readings in Japanese imported food in our surveillance programme. The Chairman enquired about the recent incident in Taiwan in March 2015 in which import of food products from prefectures of Japan that were banned from supplying Taiwan were found imported with incorrect labels, and whether Hong Kong had encountered the same problem. Dr HO replied that CFS had conducted inspection and no irregularities had been observed in Hong Kong as far as labelling of food from different prefectures of Japan was concerned.

16. Mrs Sandra MAK noted that other neighbouring markets such as Taiwan and South Korea had adopted more stringent restrictions on import of Japanese food. She asked why Hong Kong did not follow suit. Dr Raymond Ho replied that scientific data collected locally did not support the need for more stringent restrictions adopted in Taiwan and South Korea which might have taken into account their own geographical and other specific considerations. CFS would continue to communicate with relevant authorities of these markets to learn about their consideration on imposing such restrictions and make reference where appropriate.

Agenda Item 6 : The Proposed Regulatory Framework on Nutrition and Health Claims on Infant Formula, Follow-up Formula and Pre-packaged Foods for Infants and Young Children under the Age of 36 Months (ACFEH Paper No. 7/2015) - Confidential Item

17. The discussions are kept in strict confidence.

Agenda Item 7 : Any other business

18. Members considered it useful to have the opportunity to visit some of the facilities relevant to ACFEH's purview to have a better understanding of the policies implemented on ground. After discussion, some options were proposed, viz, the Food Safety Laboratory of the Government Laboratory, columbarium and cremation facility. The Secretariat would follow up to make arrangement after consultation with members on the final choice.

19. Mrs Cherry TSE took the opportunity to thank Chairman and Members for their service on this Council. She suggested that the Government would in future seek to consult the Council at the earlier stage of the policy formulation process so that we could make full use of the Council and have the benefit of the advice from the Chairman and Members during the option gestation stage rather than after completion of deliberation. Nevertheless, this could be pursued only if the Committee agreed to abide by rules of confidentiality. The Chairman and Members supported such an idea.

20. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. The Secretariat would inform members of the date of the next meeting in due course.

Secretariat

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene
November 2015**