

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of the 63rd Meeting
held at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, 27 February 2017,
in Room 1801, 18/F, Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong.**

Prof LO Yuk-lam	(Chairman)
Dr Doris AU Wai-ting	
Dr Felix CHAN Hon-wai, JP	
Mr David CHAN Wai-ming, MH, JP	
Mr Abraham CHAN Yu-ling	
Prof CHIU Siu-wai	
Dr CHUNG Shan-shan	
Mrs Jenny LAM WEN Mei-fong	
Prof Kenneth LEUNG Mei-yee	
Prof Leo POON Lit-man	
Mr Simon TAM Hop-sing	
Prof WONG Wing-tak	
Mrs Cherry TSE LING Kit-ching, JP	Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)
Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP	Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Dr Gloria TAM Lai-fan, JP	Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Acting) / Controller of Centre for Food Safety
Dr Regina CHING Cheuk-tuen, JP	Head, Surveillance & Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health
Mr Bill WONG Kwok-piu	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) ³ (Secretary to ACFEH)

Absent with Apologies

Mrs Vivien CHEN CHOU Mei-mei

Ms Josephine KEA Chi-shun

Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwok-keung

Mrs Sandra MAK WONG Siu-chun

Prof Samuel WONG Yeung-shan

In Attendance

Food and Health Bureau (FHB)

Mr Eugene FUNG Kin-yip, JP

Deputy Secretary for Food and Health
(Food)2

Miss Cherry WONG Pui-sum

Assistant Secretary (Food) Special Duties 4

Miss Fanny YEUNG Pou-ian

Assistant Secretary (Food)4

Miss Swing YAU Sze-wing

Assistant Secretary (Food)5

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung

Assistant Director (Inspection &
Quarantine)

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)

Dr HO Yuk-yin, JP

Consultant (Community Medicine)(Risk
Assessment & Communication),
Centre for Food Safety

Dr Sarah CHOI Mei-ye, JP

Assistant Director (Food Surveillance &
Control), Centre for Food Safety

Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed members and Government representatives to the 63rd meeting of the Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene (ACFEH).

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

2. The Secretariat received a proposed amendment from a member on the minutes of the last meeting. Since no further comment was raised at the meeting, the minutes were confirmed.

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

3. The plan of the Working Group on Green Burial and Related Matters was briefly introduced at the last meeting. The matter would be further reported under Agenda Item 6.

Agenda Item 3 : Plan for Food Surveillance Programme in 2017 (Confidential Item) (ACFEH Paper 1/2017)

4. The discussions are kept in strict confidence.

Agenda Item 4 : Initiatives to Reduce Salt and Sugar Levels in Food (ACFEH Paper 2/2017)

5. Miss Cherry WONG briefed members on the Government's initiatives to gradually reduce the intake of salt and sugar in food of Hong Kong people. Mr Eugene FUNG added that the Government had been spending a lot of efforts on education and publicity, and had been working closely with the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food (CRSS), with a view to changing the mindset and dietary habit of the public. However, it would take considerable time to change dietary habits. Also, in the absence of a powerful demand from consumers, the trade did not see promising business prospects in introducing menus with emphasis on less salt and sugar or products with reduced salt and sugar contents. He said that maximizing support with emphasis on raising the awareness of the general public and the trade on the health risks of taking too much salt and sugar was an appropriate first step, as it helped lay a sound foundation for inducing future changes to the dietary habits. With the industry's voluntary participation to progressively lower the content of salt and sugar in food, the public would gradually adapt to the changes in flavor and be receptive to a relatively

healthier diet. This would also allow time for the industry to make adjustment accordingly, thus, reducing the impact of the measures on their actual operation.

6. Mrs Jenny LAM said that the use of fresh ingredients was the key to keeping the food tasty while reducing the use of salt and sugar, but there were cost implications to the restaurant operators in using fresher ingredients. The trade was concerned whether consumers were willing to pay more for healthier diets when dining outside. Mrs TSE referred to the suggestions on CFS' website regarding the use of natural (but inexpensive) ingredients to enhance taste and flavor and reduce the use of salt/sugar. She had personally tried out some of the suggestions and was satisfied with the effect.

7. Members generally agreed that the publicity effort should be targeted at children through pre-primary institutions and primary schools, with a view to developing a healthy dietary habit from the early age, and that more promotion should be done towards the trade and food manufacturers. On the issue of whether the elderly should be another target group, Dr CHAN commented that many of the elderly people were having problems of taking too little food. He said that the problem was particularly common to elderly people residing in residential care homes for the elderly. He considered that, comparatively speaking, it was a more pressing concern on how to encourage elderly people to take sufficient food for sufficient nutrients than controlling their intake of salt and sugar in food.

8. Members suggested providing funding support to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to organise community-wide campaigns; introducing a commendation/recognition scheme to recognise food premises which had made good efforts in reducing salt and sugar levels in their food; and engaging renowned chefs and members of the public in designing healthy recipes with lower level of salt and sugar. Mr FUNG said that the Food and Health Bureau was providing \$250,000 to each District Council (i.e. \$4.5 million for the 18 District Councils in total) to encourage and fund district/local community groups to organize activities that would bring home the health messages of reduced salt and sugar intake through food. Interested parties, including NGOs, could apply for funding from the relevant District Councils. CRSS was considering a front-of-pack low-salt-low-sugar labeling scheme for pre-packaged food, which would allow easy identification of low-salt-low-sugar products. Also, the Government in collaboration with CRSS, would launch a front-of-pack low-salt-low-sugar label design competition and a slogan-and-poster design competition, to raise the awareness of the general public and the trade on the importance of the reduction of salt and sugar in food. The Government would also consider making use of other promotional platforms such as YouTube and Facebook.

9. In response to Dr AU's enquiry on whether the Government would also drive for the reduced intake of fats in food, Dr HO Yuk-yin explained that the Government had been promoting healthy eating for decades. In recent years, the World Health Organisation attached greater importance to reducing the intake of salt and sugar levels in food. In view of the local context, the Government aimed to gradually reduce the intake of salt and sugar of Hong Kong people to the levels recommended by the World Health Organisation. Also, CFS had plan to conduct a questionnaire survey to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of the public on the subject, serving as a baseline for future evaluation of the programme. In response to members' queries on how to measure the effectiveness of the promotion and education efforts of the Government and CRSS on the reduction of salt and sugar in food, Mr FUNG said that it would take time to demonstrate how the promotion and education efforts was bringing changes to the mindset of the community.

Agenda Item 5 : Bio-security Measures Implemented in Local Chicken Farms (ACFEH Paper 3/2017)

10. Dr Thomas SIT briefed members on the latest preventive and control measures of avian influenza (AI) adopted in local chicken farms, including the AI vaccination programme. In response to the Chairman's enquiry on the reporting mechanism with the Mainland on AI, Dr SIT explained that the Food and Health Bureau had established an effective communication channel with the Mainland's Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) on important animal diseases. In addition, we would also be notified of any AI incidents by members of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) including the Mainland.

11. Prof Leo POON enquired if the H7 vaccine developed by the Harbin Veterinary Research Institute would be introduced in Hong Kong. Dr LEUNG Siu-fai and Dr SIT clarified that the H7 vaccine was not registered yet, as the Mainland authorities had not yet decided to put it to use in the Mainland poultry farms given the phenominal cost associated with the vaccination national-wide and the need for changing the serological monitoring system after vaccination. This notwithstanding, AFCD was making advance preparation for its possible registration in Hong Kong and application in local chicken farms in the future, including engaging the University of Hong Kong to confirm the efficacy of the vaccine. For the next step, a field trial study would need to be conducted for the registration of the vaccine in Hong Kong.

12. Dr TAM took the opportunity to remark on some salient points of Hong Kong's AI prevention protocol at its different stages of development over the past two decades. For the H5 prevention programme, the cornerstone was the

introduction of good agricultural practice, including farm registration and biosecurity, in both Mainland and local farms since 1998. Then, the once and subsequently twice monthly market cleansing day, targeted at the breakage of the viral infectious cycle as well as the thorough disinfection of the Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market and fresh provision shops selling live poultry, was first brought in from 2001 onward. The timely vaccination in 2003 of both imported and local live food poultry allowed the ongoing supply of live food poultry whilst providing protection against both animal disease and hence zoonosis. The whole former package was widely regarded as a platinum standard model amongst the public health and veterinary public health circles worldwide.

13. As for H7 prevention, MoA had just reported to OIE that China's some current H7 strain circulated in Guangdong province demonstrated high pathogenicity characteristics. Dr TAM assessed that, as the Harbin Veterinary Research Institute had already developed an efficacious H7 vaccine, it might not be long before the Mainland would apply H7 vaccination to its live food poultry, much like the H5 scenario 20 years ago.

14. Given Hong Kong's track record in guarding against the AI risk at the local farm level, Prof CHIU Siu-wai suggested increasing the supply of local live chickens in place of imported chickens, and sharing our successful experience in AI control with the Mainland authorities. Dr LEUNG clarified that currently local chicken farms had not made full use of the licenced rearing capacity of 1.3 million. Mrs TSE concurred that despite the rearing cap on local poultry farms, there was no evidence to suggest any unmet demand in Hong Kong for live chicken. Despite the public's preference for local chickens, Mrs TSE and Dr LEUNG explained that the management of, and biosecurity measures used in, Mainland registered chicken farms were more or less the same as, or even better than, those in Hong Kong.

15. To provide members with a more complete picture of the global AI risk, information on the AI outbreak across the world would be provided after the meeting.

[Post-meeting note : The latest update on the highly pathogenic AI in animals and the news of human cases of AI are available on the websites of OIE (<http://www.oie.int/en/animal-health-in-the-world/update-on-avian-influenza/2017/>) and Centre for Health Protection (http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/2017_avian_influenza_report_vol13_wk09.pdf) respectively.]

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

16. The Chairman reported that, at the first meeting of the Working Group on Green Burial and Related Matters, FEHD briefed members on the existing green burial services and facilities as well as the on-going promotion efforts. The meeting then had a discussion on how the relevant efforts could be further enhanced, covering topics and suggestions including DNA fingerprinting, targeted promotion efforts, etc. The working group meeting agreed that the Government would draw up a systematic work plan to facilitate discussion at future meetings. A visit on the scattering of ashes at sea was arranged on 7 January 2017. The Government would arrange another visit on the scattering of ashes at sea for members who were unable to join last time, and another visit for members to see the Garden of Remembrance at Junk Bay Cemetery of the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries.

17. The Chairman thanked members for their valuable advice to the Government on a wide range of important issues during the current term expiring 31 March 2017, and in particular thanked Mrs Sandra MAK who would retire from ACFEH after serving for 6 years. Mrs TSE joined the Chairman in thanking members for their contribution to ACFEH, and invited members to consider proposing subjects pertinent to ACFEH's terms of reference for discussion at future meetings.

18. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Secretariat
Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene
May 2017