

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene**

**Minutes of the 71<sup>st</sup> Meeting  
held at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, 7 May 2019, in  
Room 1801, 18/F, Central Government  
Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong**

Prof LO Yuk-lam (Chairman)

Mr David CHAN Wai-ming, MH, JP

Prof CHIU Siu-wai

Dr CHEN Xue-ping

Mr Jack CHEUNG Ki-tang

Dr Jill CHIU Man-ying

Ms Sandy KEUNG Yurk-nam

Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwok-keung

Prof Leo POON Lit-man

Dr Lucy SHUM Wan-cheong

Dr So Tsz-him

Mr Richard TSANG Lap-ki

Prof WONG Man-sau

Mr Philip YUNG Wai-hung, JP Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)

Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Miss Vivian LAU Lee-kwan, JP Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Dr Rita HO Ka-wai Consultant Community Medicine (Non-Communicable Disease)

Mr Bill WONG Kwok-piu Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)<sup>3</sup>  
(Secretary to ACFEH)

### **Absent with Apologies**

Prof Felix CHAN Hon-wai, JP

Mr Simon TAM Hop-sing

Mr WONG Wing-tak

Prof Samuel WONG Yeung-shan

### **In Attendance**

#### **Food and Health Bureau (FHB)**

Mr Daniel CHENG Chung-wai, JP Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)1

Mr Eugene FUNG Kin-yip, JP Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)2

Ms Chelsea WONG Wing-chee Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Mr GURUNG Marco Ben Assistant Secretary (Food)4

Ms Swing YAU Sze-wing Assistant Secretary (Food)5

Miss Rebecca CHAN Chung-hang Assistant Secretary (Food)8

#### **Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)**

Dr HO Yuk-yin Controller, Centre for Food Safety

#### **Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)**

Dr Kenny HO Chin-ho Principal Veterinary Officer

Dr Mary Chow Ka-wai Senior Veterinary Officer (Animal Management) Development

## **Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed members and Government representatives to the first meeting of the new term of the Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene (ACFEH) and invited members to suggest topics for discussion as appropriate. Mr Philip YUNG on behalf of the Government thanked the Chairman for his leadership and welcomed the newly appointed members, and encouraged members to proactively share their views and propose topics for discussion during the new term.

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

2. The minutes of the last meeting on 21 March 2019 were confirmed without any comment raised by members.

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

3. As foreshadowed at the last meeting, the food safety management and import control of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) would be discussed under Agenda Item 3 below.

### **Agenda Item 3: Food Safety Management and Import Control of the CFS (ACFEH Paper 3/2019)**

4. In response to the questions by the Chairman and Mr Stephen LEUNG, Dr HO Yuk-yin briefed the meeting on the assessments and recommendations of the Audit Commission on CFS's work, and the improvement initiatives implemented / to be implemented to improve the effectiveness of its work.

5. Mr Stephen LEUNG advised that CFS's operational manuals and guidelines should be prepared in a bottom-up approach to ensure they be thoroughly implemented by front-line staff. Prof CHIU Siu-wai suggested that training to prepare front-line staff for different scenarios, say through role-play, would be useful, and believed that CFS should enhance its manpower to take forward the new initiatives.

6. Prof Leo POON enquired whether CFS would change the sampling plan of the Food Surveillance Program (FSP). Dr HO Yuk-yin said in the past a higher proportion of samples were collected from supermarkets, and in the future the net of samples would be cast wider. In addition, testing would be expedited and information technology (IT) would be used to help improve the sampling. To reflect the trend that heavy metals now might pose a higher food safety risk than pesticide residues, more tests would be conducted on the former. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, Dr HO advised that the number of samples examined per population was on par with other overseas countries. Prof CHIU Siu-wai

supported widening the sampling coverage, but was of the view that the risk of pesticides residues in food should not be ignored. CFS should draw reference from international practice. Mr David CHAN suggested the Government allocate more resources for safeguarding food safety, and more samples should be collected on high-risk food, eg. sashimi and crustaceans. Mr Jack CHEUNG suggested the Government conduct tests on food that the youth favored in order to draw their attention to the test results.

7. Prof WONG Man-sau suggested the Government should consider conducting food consumption surveys in-house to ensure the results could be monitored continuously. Such surveys should be conducted by experts in food safety rather than those only with social science background. Dr CHEN Xue-ping noted that it would be difficult for the Government to keep track of the large number of contaminants in food, and suggested the Government could consider cooperating with other food safety agencies including those on the Mainland and in overseas countries.

8. In response to Dr Jill CHIU's advice on conducting research on the presence of micro-plastics in food, Dr HO Yuk-yin said that CFS monitored substances posing new threats and had already presented some information of micro-plastics in the past. Dr HO advised that so far there was no conclusive findings on the impact of micro-plastics on health, and the Government Laboratory was looking into how such impact could be more accurately measured. Dr CHIU added that there was evidence of micro-plastics' impact not only on health but also on the environment, and was of the view that more research could provide evidence on the prevalence of micro-plastics in the food chain and environment to justify systematic monitoring.

9. The Chairman suggested adopting blockchain system in the management of data for enhancing food safety and suggested discussion of this topic in the future.

10. Mr Jack CHEUNG advised the Government to utilise social media platforms and the network of District Councils, to disseminate information on test results. Mr Richard TSANG suggested the Government disseminate food safety messages to the public.

11. Dr Lucy SHUM advised the Government to regulate food safety of pet food and genetically modified food. Dr SO Tsz-him enquired if CFS also monitored the use of MSG in restaurants. Dr HO Yuk-yin said that CFS was responsible for ensuring safety of food for human consumption only. The Department of Health and CFS have been launching initiatives to promote sodium-reduction and healthy diet culture in the community.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Public Consultation on the Proposals to Enhance Animal welfare (ACFEH Paper 4/2019)**

12. Dr Mary CHOW briefed members on the proposals to enhance animal welfare.

13. Dr Jill CHIU advised the Government to expand the scope of the proposals to cover livestock animals.

14. Mr Daniel CHENG explained that the current legislation already prohibited acts of animal cruelty and there were already guidelines / codes of practice for the welfare of food animals. He further advised that to further enhance animal welfare, a positive 'duty of care' on responsible persons for animals would be introduced. Dr Jill CHIU said that pets and livestock animals should be handled differently since the duty of care for the two types of animals would be vastly different. Dr LEUNG Siu-fai supplemented that there were already general guidelines for proper care of common species of pet and food animals and all animal keepers should make reference to these guidelines in taking care of their animals. In addition, there were guidelines for handling animals in slaughterhouse and laboratory. AFCD would further review such codes / guidelines in a step-by-step manner in consultation with stakeholders, with a view to enhancing them as necessary.

15. In reponse to Dr Jill CHIU's enquiry on regulating mercy release of animals that would impact on the ecology, Dr LEUNG Siu-fai explained that the current review was focused on animal welfare only.

16. Mr David CHAN enquired whether there would be sufficient manpower for enforcement, including whether animal police would be established, and was of the view that enforcement would be difficult without a mandatory requirement of microchipping animals. Dr Kenny HO informed that the Hong Kong Police Force, in conjunction with AFCD, other relevant government departments, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the School of Veterinary Medicine of the City University of Hong Kong and local veterinary associations established an Animal Watch Scheme to combat animal cruelty. Designated teams in the 22 Police districts were established to investigate cases relating to animal cruelty. AFCD would flexibly deploy its manpower and cooperate with the Police. As regards the issue of microchipping, Dr. HO pointed out that the principle of duty of care would apply equally to all animal keepers, whether the subject animals were microchipped or not.

17. Ms Sandy KEUNG said that the catering sector would be concerned if they would inadvertently infringe the law in handling food animals or sick animals. Dr. Mary CHOW responded that it would depend on the facts and circumstances. For sick animals, euthanasia, upon assesment by a vet surgeon, would be

acceptable. Dr Kenny HO added that apart from deterring animal cruelty, the legislation of imposing positive duty of care also aimed to enhance public awareness on animal welfare.

18. Prof Leo POON enquired how the legislative amendment would prevent large scale release of animals. Dr Mary CHOW responded that the person responsible for the animals had the duty of care towards the animals and must consider if the release would result in acts of animal cruelty.

19. The Chairman suggested the Government should consider whether the implications of the proposals would not be inappropriate vis-à-vis human rights.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Any other business**

20. The Chairman invited members to indicate their interest in joining the Working Group on Green Burial and Related Matters for promoting green burial in Hong Kong. He pointed out that the Working Group had offered two seats to youth under the Member Self-Recommendation Scheme for Youth (Phase II) to demonstrate the Government's aspiration to attract more young people to serve on advisory bodies.

21. The Secretariat would inform members of the date of the next ACFEH meeting.

22. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

**Secretariat**

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene**

**July 2019**