

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of the 72nd Meeting
held at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, 5 September 2019,
in Room 1801, 18/F,
Central Government Offices,
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong**

Prof LO Yuk-lam (Chairman)

Prof Felix CHAN Hon-wai, JP

Mr David CHAN Wai-ming, MH, JP

Prof CHIU Siu-wai

Dr CHEN Xue-ping

Dr Jill CHIU Man-ying

Ms Sandy KEUNG Yurk-nam

Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwok-keung

Mr Simon TAM Hop-sing

Mr Richard TSANG Lap-ki

Prof WONG Man-sau

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

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

Dr SO Ping-man, JP Acting Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation / Deputy Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

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

Mr Bill WONG Kwok-piu

Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and
Health (Food)3
(Secretary to ACFEH)

Absent with Apologies

Mr Jack CHEUNG Ki-tang

Prof Leo POON Lit-man

Dr Lucy SHUM Wan-cheong

Dr So Tsz-him

Mr WONG Wing-tak

Prof Samuel WONG Yeung-shan

In Attendance

Food and Health Bureau (FHB)

Miss Yandy CHAN Tsz-yan Assistant Secretary (Food)1

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

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)

Dr Edwin TSUI Lok-kin Assistant Director(Risk Management)

Mr WAN Chi Shun Superintendent(Slaughterhouse)

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Dr Thomas SIT Hon-chung Assistant Director (Inspection & Quarantine)

Dr Lucia LAW Siu-lun Veterinary Officer/Antimicrobial Resistance
Surveillance 1

Opening Remarks

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

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

2. The minutes of the last meeting on 7 May 2019 were confirmed.

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

3. At the meeting in November 2018, members were briefed on African Swine Fever (ASF) and the preventive measures by the Government. The Government's work in response to the ASF outbreaks in Hong Kong would be reported under agenda item 3.

4. At the meeting in September 2017, members were briefed on the food-related initiatives under the Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) (2017-2022). The progress of the work on AMR in food animals would be reported under agenda item 4.

Agenda Item 3: Work in Responses to African Swine Fever Cases in Hong Kong (ACFEH Paper 5/2019)

5. Dr Thomas SIT gave a powerpoint presentation.

6. In response to Mr Stephen LEUNG, Dr SIT and Dr Edwin TSUI said that so far scientific researches confirmed that ASF virus was non-zoonotic and posed no food safety issue even if infected pork was consumed.

7. In response to the Chairman's questions concerning the availability of vaccine and rapid test for ASF, Dr Thomas SIT explained that there was a lack of incentive for advanced economies, such as those in Europe and North America, to develop ASF vaccine as they were so far able to keep the ASF away from their countries. In addition, the unique large genomic antigenicity of ASF made it difficult to make effective and safe vaccine. Due to the huge impact on the Mainland's pig industries, veterinary laboratories in Qingdao and Harbin were currently conducting research on developing the ASF vaccine. Regarding testing of ASF, the PCR testing adopted in AFCD veterinary laboratory for ASF could already produce results in around three to four hours.

8. Dr Felix CHAN enquired why detection of ASF infection was only based on clinical symptoms. Dr Edwin TSUI provided a background that the Mainland authorities had put in place a vigorous prevention and control regime at the source level for pigs imported from the Mainland and thus it was reasonable and effective to detect ASF at the Hong Kong end based on observing symptoms. Dr Thomas SIT further described the normal symptoms of ASF in pigs.

9. In response to Mr David CHAN's question on prevention of ASF at the local farm level, Dr SIT explained that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) offered technical advice to local pig farms on enhancing their biosecurity including banning of swill feeding, as well as cleansing and disinfecting pig-carrying trucks both at the slaughterhouses and at the farms.

10. Ms Sandy KEUNG expressed concern over the impact of shortage of pork supply on the catering industry, which now had to resort to frozen meat from other places such as Brazil. Overseas experience, like that in Spain, was that it would require incentives from the Government to prevent farmers from selling infected pigs as frozen meat. She enquired what work the Government had done on ASF in frozen meat.

11. Dr Thomas SIT remarked that the approach adopted by the Mainland authorities in handling ASF outbreaks, including culling of pigs in infected farms and providing sufficient compensation for culled pigs, was well recognized as the appropriate way in putting ASF under control. AFCD would adopt a similar approach in case of outbreaks in Hong Kong pig farms. Dr Edwin TSUI supplemented that as ASF-borne food posed no food safety risk, there was no plan at present to conduct surveillance in frozen pork.

12. Prof WONG Man-Sau enquired whether the Government would promote other protein sources in view of the shortage of pork supply. Dr Thomas SIT expected that pigs would still be the major protein source as the feed conversion rate was relatively higher in pigs than in other food animals. Mr Daniel CHENG added that the Mainland authorities ensured stable supply of meat to Hong Kong. Notwithstanding ASF outbreaks on the Mainland, the supply of live pigs had been by and large maintained, and the Mainland had recently announced measures to increase pig production. Moreover, supply of chilled pork from the Mainland had also increased.

13. The Chairman enquired whether the Government should work more on selecting registered pig farms for supplying to Hong Kong. Dr TSUI explained that the Government would regularly inspect registered pig farms on the Mainland and the Mainland authorities had already implemented a stringent regime for screening out ASF-infected pigs from supplying to Hong Kong.

Agenda Item 4: Progress of the Work of Tackling the Threat of Antimicrobial Resistance in Food Animals (ACFEH Paper 6/2019)

14. Dr Thomas SIT briefed members on the progress of work on tackling the threat of AMR in food animals in Hong Kong.

15. Dr Jill CHIU remarked that it was too tedious to provide sufficient number of isolates due to difficulty in culturing certain bacteria, and suggested using DNA sequencing for detecting AMR in fish. Dr Lucia LAW advised that this issue was acknowledged by the consultant who had conducted the consultancy study to devise surveillance systems for AMR and antimicrobial usage in food animals in Hong Kong. The surveillance method could be subject to change over time having regard to the development of technology in other countries and experience gained in the surveillance in the first few years. Prof CHIU Siu-wai was of the view that it would need an integrated approach of both DNA sequencing and isolates to study the issue.

16. Dr CHEN Xue-ping enquired the possibility of not using antibiotics for fish husbandry. The Chairman noted that intensive culturing did require usage of a certain amount of antimicrobials. Dr SO Ping-man agreed that the direction was to reduce usage of antibiotics through improving the culturing environment, though it would take a long time to completely stop the usage. Dr SIT added that the focus had been changed from non-abusive to appropriate use of antimicrobials.

17. In response to Prof CHIU's question, Dr TSUI advised that the Centre for Food Safety was working with a research institution in drawing up a pilot survey for testing AMR in food, initially to cover fresh meat and ready-to-eat raw food, e.g. salad and sashimi.

18. In response to Mr Stephen LEUNG's enquiry on how antimicrobials were administered in food animals to avoid affecting humans, Dr Thomas SIT explained that the World Organisation of Animal Health suggested reserving critical antimicrobials for humans.

19. Mr Simon TAM advised the Government to enhance the awareness of the catering industry on AMR in food by providing more education and information to them. Dr TSUI responded that the Government would enhance the communication with the catering industry.

Agenda Item 5: Any other business

20. Mr Stephen LEUNG suggested the Government consider organising more food festivals with a view to boosting the economy. The Chairman noted that quite a number of such events were organised by AFCD as well as industrial

and trade organisations.

21. The Chairman invited members to suggest topics for discussion in the future. Dr Jill CHIU suggested discussing the promotion of plant-based diet.

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

23. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at noon.

Secretariat

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

September 2019