

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of the 74th Meeting
held at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, 10 December 2020,
in Room 1801, East Wing, 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	
Mr Jack CHEUNG Ki-tang	
Dr CHEN Xue-ping	
Dr Jill CHIU Man-ying	
Prof CHIU Siu-wai	
Ms Sandy KEUNG Yurk-nam	
Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwok-keung	
Prof Leo POON Lit-man	
Dr Lucy SHUM Wan-cheong	
Mr Simon TAM Hop-sing	
Mr Richard TSANG Lap-ki	
Prof WONG Man-sau	
Prof Samuel WONG Yeung-shan	
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

Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed members and Government representatives to the fourth 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 20 January 2020 were confirmed.

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

3. At the 71st meeting on 7 May 2019, members were briefed on food safety management and import control by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS). The public consultation on the Government's proposed amendments to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF) and the progress on enhancing the information technology systems of the CFS would be reported under agenda items 3 and 4.

Agenda Item 3: Public consultation on the proposed amendments to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF) (Confidential Item) (ACFEH Paper 3/2020)

4. The discussions are kept in strict confidence.

Agenda Item 4: Enhancement of the information technology systems of the Centre for Food Safety (ACFEH Paper 4/2020)

5. Ms. Mildred CHEUNG gave a PowerPoint presentation and briefed members on the latest progress in enhancing the information technology (IT) systems of CFS.
6. Dr Lucy SHUM asked if there was any food surveillance programme for animal foods. Dr. Edwin TSUI responded that the current Food Surveillance Programme was focused on food for human consumption.
7. Prof WONG Man-sau expressed concerns over the security of the IT systems, as there might be confidential information that should not be disclosed to the public. On the other hand, she suggested that the Government should provide public access to statistics that were not confidential for research purposes. Dr Edwin TSUI explained that currently only the Government could use the information in the Food Trader Portal ("FTP") for conducting analysis, but the CFS remained open to the potential of future collaborations with research institutes. In relation to security, Ms. Mildred CHEUNG responded that firewalls and intrusion

detection system were installed within the IT systems, and that the transfer and storage of data would both be encrypted. Unauthorized access was prohibited, and all authorized activities would be recorded. A third-party cybersecurity company had been engaged to conduct a thorough assessment of the IT systems to ensure its attaining a satisfactory security level.

8. The Chairman suggested that intact data storage within the IT systems was important for easy traceability, and asked if the Government had considered employing blockchain technology in developing the systems. Dr Edwin TSUI responded that while technologies including blockchain and big data were not employed in CFS' IT systems yet, CFS had been actively exploring the use of new IT solutions, including blockchain and big data analysis with research institutes and key importers.

9. Mr. Jack CHEUNG expressed his support over the shift to electronic services, and enquired on the availability of guidelines or trainings to those not familiar with online systems. Dr Edwin TSUI explained that the system was fairly simple, and that familiarisation sessions had been conducted to encourage the use of the systems. Ms. Mildred CHEUNG added that trainings and introductory sessions were made available to importers, and tutorial videos and FAQs were also available on the FTP. So far, over 90% of applications for import licenses and import permission of meat and poultry were submitted and granted through the FTP. The online application for import permission for eggs should be introduced on the FTP in 2021. Mr. Jack CHEUNG further suggested that the FTP should be available to users as a mobile application. Ms. Mildred CHEUNG replied that the Government planned to do this in the future.

Agenda Item 5: Any other business

New extendable public niches at Tsang Tsui Columbarium

10. Miss Vivian LAU briefed members on the recent announcement made by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) that applications for the new extendable public niches at Tsang Tsui Columbarium in Tuen Mun would be accepted all year round from December 1, 2020, to November 30, 2021, for allocation on a monthly basis. Depending on the number of applications received, the FEHD planned to allocate around 1 700 niches at Tsang Tsui Columbarium per month.

COVID-19 testing on imported frozen foods and their packaging

11. Prof. Leo POON asked about COVID-19 testing strategy on imported frozen foods and their packaging. Dr Jackie LEUNG said that COVID-19 tests on

selected batches of frozen foods and their packaging had been conducted in the past months. Over 500 samples had been tested so far and the results were all negative. Dr Edwin TSUI commented that the COVID-19 cases reported locally were transmitted mainly through droplet among humans. Nonetheless, the Government would keep monitoring the development and take further actions when necessary. As for locations of potentially higher risks like cold stores, the Government had issued guidelines to remind their staff to maintain good hand and personal hygiene. FEHD had also provided COVID-19 testing to those working in cold stores. Prof CHIU Siu-wai suggested that the Government could consider issuing guidelines to the public for handling frozen foods to prevent COVID-19.

12. Dr Jill CHIU expressed concerns over the operation of privately owned barbecue sites in New Territories under the pandemic. In response, Miss Vivian LAU said that FEHD would take enforcement actions as appropriate in collaboration with relevant government departments.

Promotion of contactless payment in public markets

13. The Chairman enquired the participation rate of contactless payment among public market stall operators. Miss Vivian LAU responded that FEHD had launched a subsidy scheme (at a unit rate of \$5,000) to encourage stall operators to use contactless payment. So far, over 3,000 out of some 12,000 eligible stalls had applied for the subsidy.

14. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

**Secretariat
Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene
December 2020**