

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of the 75th Meeting
held at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, 25 March 2021,
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 Jill CHIU Man-ying	
Prof CHIU Siu-wai	
Mr Stephen LEUNG Kwok-keung	
Prof Leo POON Lit-man	
Mr Simon TAM Hop-sing	
Mr Richard TSANG Lap-ki	
Prof WONG Wing-tak	
Prof WONG Man-sau	
Miss Vivian LAU Lee-kwan, JP	Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)
Dr LEUNG Siu-Fai, JP	Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Dr Edwin TSUI Lok Kin	Controller, Centre for Food Safety / Acting Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene
Dr Rita HO Ka-wai	Head, Non-Communicable Disease Branch, Department of Health
Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) ³ (Secretary to ACFEH)

Absent with Apologies

Dr CHEN Xue-ping

Ms Sandy KEUNG Yurk-nam

Dr Lucy SHUM Wan-cheong

Dr So Tsz-him

Prof Samuel WONG Yeung-shan

In Attendance

Food and Health Bureau (FHB)

Miss Erica NG Lai-man

Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Mr Anthony LI Ping-wai

Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Ms Chelsea WONG Wing-chee

Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)1

Miss Yandy CHAN Tsz-yan

Assistant Secretary (Food)1

Mr Ivan WONG Lap Yan

Assistant Secretary (Food) Special Duties 1

Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD)

Dr. Thomas SIT Hon-chung

Assistant Director (Inspection & Quarantine)

Dr. Jeremy HO Hon-pong

Veterinary Officer (Animal Health)1

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and Centre for Food Safety (CFS)

Dr Samuel YEUNG Tze-kiu

Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment & Communication)

Mr LAI Siu-kwong

Senior Superintendent (Municipal Solid Waste Charging) / Acting Assistant Director (Operations Division)3

Mr WAN Chi-shun

Superintendent (Slaughterhouse)

Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed members and Government representatives to the last meeting of the current term of the Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene (ACFEH). Some new members and a new Chairman will be joining the ACFEH. The Chairman also welcomed and introduced Miss Vivian LAU, the new Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food). Miss Vivian LAU thanked the Chairman for his leadership and members for their advice on a wide range of important issues including food safety and environmental hygiene. Miss Erica NG remarked that a press release on the appointment of the new term would be issued on 26 March 2021.

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

2. The minutes of the last meeting on 10 December 2020 were confirmed.

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

3. At the last meeting, members were briefed on the public consultation on the proposed amendments to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF). The result of public consultation would be reported under agenda item 3.

4. At the 69th meeting on 18 November 2018 and the 72nd meeting of 5 September 2019, members were briefed on the Government's work in response to the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF). The Government's work in response to the recent ASF case in a local pig farm would be reported under agenda item 4.

Agenda Item 3: Result of public consultation on the proposed amendments to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Confidential Item) (ACFEH Paper 1/2021)

5. The discussions are kept in strict confidence.

Agenda Item 4: Work in response to African Swine Fever case in a local pig farm (ACFEH Paper 2/2021)

6. Dr Thomas SIT briefed the meeting with PowerPoint presentation on the work in response to African Swine Fever (ASF) case in a local pig farm.

7. In response to Mr Stephen LEUNG's question concerning the availability of vaccine for ASF, Dr Thomas SIT responded that the research on effective vaccine had been difficult as the ASF virus was the sole member in its virus family, Asfarviridae, which could only infect pigs but not other animals. Secondly, there was a lack of active research over the past decades on the vaccine as there had been no large outbreak in West European and North American countries. In addition,

the genome of ASF virus was large and complex, adding to the difficulty to identify the critical genes for preparation of effective vaccine. Nonetheless, the Harbin Veterinary Research Institute was actively conducting research on developing an ASF vaccine.

8. Prof Leo POON asked about the testing for ASF in wild pigs, and whether there was any relation between the genetic sequence of ASF virus detected in the local pig farm and the virus found in Mainland's cases. Dr Thomas SIT said that AFCD has been collaborating with FEHD on an ASF surveillance programme for wild pig carcasses. 36 wild pig carcasses were collected mainly from New Territories and the vicinity of pig farms, and the results were all negative. In addition, AFCD also collected blood samples from live wild pigs occasionally for ASF testing, and results were all negative. Whole genome sequencing and phylogenetic analysis of the virus found in the local pig farm had been conducted and results did not suggest that the outbreak was related to unapproved vaccine.

9. The Chairman asked whether the Government would liaise with Harbin Veterinary Research Institute. Dr Thomas SIT responded that AFCD has close collaborations with the institute. The veterinary laboratories of AFCD and Harbin had collaborated to develop an effective vaccine for H5N1 Avian Influenza (AI) back in 1997. The H5/H7 AI bivalent vaccine currently used in local poultry farms was also developed by Harbin Veterinary Research Institute. Apart from Harbin, the veterinary laboratories in England and United States were also actively conducting research on the development of an ASF vaccine.

10. Mr David CHAN suggested that the Government should continue to advise the public that ASF did not have any food safety concerns and pork should be fully cooked for consumption. He also suggested that education on prevention of ASF to the local pig farms and preventive measures at slaughterhouses should be enhanced. He also suggested to consider importing live pigs from other places. Dr Thomas SIT replied that AFCD had been conducting educational seminars for local pig farms on ASF, and AFCD and FEHD had been conducting thorough cleansing and disinfection of slaughterhouses and pig transportation vehicles. In addition, AFCD would explore implementing "one-trip-one-farm" (point-to-point transportation of pigs from one farm directly to one slaughterhouse), in order to reduce the transmission risk of ASF via pig transportation vehicles. Regarding the import of live pigs from other places, traders did not find it viable because of the relative high cost. Dr Edwin TSUI added that the health message "disease does not infect humans and does not pose a food safety risk, meat of pigs is safe for consumption when thoroughly cooked" had been disseminated in the press releases and Facebook messages on the ASF outbreak.

11. Mr Jack CHEUNG enquired about the number of pig farms and pigs supplied to slaughterhouses. Dr Thomas SIT said that there are 43 local pig farms supplying a total of approximately 200 to 300 live pigs to slaughterhouses daily.

12. Prof CHIU asked whether there was any relationship between the current ASF case and those found in 2019. Dr Thomas SIT replied the ASF cases in Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse in 2019 were detected from imported pigs. Relevant Government departments have implemented various additional preventive measures against ASF since then. Dr Edwin TSUI said that a daily clearance arrangement had been implemented under which live pigs would be slaughtered within 24 hours upon admittance, and thorough cleansing had been conducted every day in the slaughterhouses, and ASF had not been detected from imported pigs since 2019.

Agenda Item 5: Any other business

13. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Secretariat

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

April 2021