

**Centre for Food Safety**  
**Food and Environmental Hygiene Department**  
**Notes of the Thirty-first Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum**  
**held on 9 September 2011 at 2:30 p.m.**  
**in Conference Room at Room 102, 1/F, New Wan Chai Market,**  
**258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong**

**Present**

**Government Representatives**

Dr. Y. Y. HO	Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment & Communication)	(Chairman)
Dr. Teresa CHOI	Principal Medical Officer (Risk Assessment & Communication)	
Dr. S. M. CHOI	Senior Chemist (Food Chemistry)	
Ms. S. C. CHEUNG	Superintendent (Food Surveillance)1	
Mr. W. K. CHENG	Superintendent (Food Surveillance)2	
Mr. Y. H. MA	Chief Health Inspector (Import/Export)4	
Mr. C. L. CHIU	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling)	
Dr. Ken CHONG	Scientific Officer (Microbiology)	
Dr. Violette LIN	Scientific Officer (Nutrition)	
Ms. Melissa LIU	Scientific Officer (Nutrition Labelling)	
Ms. Joan YAU	Scientific Officer (Pesticide Residue)	
Mr. Nicky HO	Scientific Officer (Programme Planning)2	
Mr. W. Y. CHAN	Scientific Officer (Standard Setting)	
Ms. S. W. CHUNG	Superintendent (Risk Communication)	(Secretary)

**Trade Representatives**

Mr. Peter JOHNSTON	A.S. Watson Group (HK) Ltd.
Mr. CHENG Wing-chung	A.S. Watson Industries
Ms. Caroline YUEN	American Consulate General Hong Kong Agricultural Trade Office
Mr. Sidney NG	C K Life Sciences Ltd
Mr. WONG Kai-man	Calbee Four Seas Co., Ltd.
Mr. TSANG Wah-him	Calbee Four Seas Co., Ltd.

Ms. Grace YEE	CitySuper Ltd.
Mr. Dennis CHAN	CitySuper Ltd.
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.
Mr. CHEUNG Chun-kit	DCH Food Mart
Ms. LAW Miu-ha	DCH Foods
Mr. Roy HOU	Eurofins Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. B. HO	Gourmet House Ltd.
Ms. Frenda WONG	Hong Kong Suppliers Association.
Mr. Henry CHENG	General Mills
Mr. Allen WONG	Hong Kong Food Science & Technology Association
Mr. Gary LO	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Ms. Corine LIU	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Ms. CHAN Sze-ming	Kee Wah Bakery Ltd.
Mr. Jack TSE	Kofco Enterprise (Asia) Co., Ltd.
Mr. Aaron LEUNG	Kofco Enterprise (Asia) Co., Ltd.
Ms. Cheryl WU	Krafe Foods Ltd.
Ms. WONG Wai-man	Lee Kum Kee Int'l Holding
Ms. Daphne KWOK	Lucullus Food & Wines Co., Ltd.
Mr. Stephen LAM	Mannings
Ms. Joyce WONG	McDonald's Restaurant (HK) Ltd.
Ms. Amy XU	Meadjohson Nutrition
Ms. Abby WU	Meadjohson Nutrition
Ms. Doris CHAN	Nestle Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. Jonathan CHOW	Nikken's Japanese Food Co., Ltd.
Ms. CHEUNG Chung-man	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Mr. NG Kam-hong	Pat Chun International Ltd.
Mr. Tony CHOW	Pfizer Corporation Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. Amy FU	Pfizer Corporation Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. Caroline HO	Starbucks (CCHK)
Mr. Victor KOK	Tai Pan Bread & Cakes Co., Ltd.
Ms. Monica NG	Tao Heung Group Ltd.
Mr. Samuel CHAN	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Tess WONG	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Mr. Douglas CHENG	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Kammy YEUNG	The H.K. Standards and Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Candy HON	The H.K. Standards and Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Judy OR	The Wing On Department Stores (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Eric AU	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.

Dr. Helen CHAN	Vita Green Health products
Mr. Timothy TAM	Vita Green Health products
Mr. CHAN Chi-kong	Vitasoy International Holdings Ltd.
Ms. Wendy CHAN	Wellcome Co., Ltd.
Mr. Tommy TONG	Wellcome Co., Ltd.
Mr. Kelun CHAN	Wellcome Co., Ltd.
Mr. Philip KWAN	Wrigley Asia Pacific
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodscan Analytics Ltd.
Ms. CHOY Lai-ching	Lam Soon Hong Kong Group
Ms. Florence LAW	Procter & Gamble HK Ltd.

### **Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed all trade representatives to the meeting and introduced government representatives.

### **Confirmation of the Notes of Last Meeting**

2. The notes of last meeting were only circulated lately. Amendments to the notes might be proposed to the Secretary of the meeting for follow up actions.

### **Matters Arising from Notes of Last Meeting**

Amendment to Cap. 132AF in respect of Dried Milk, Condensed Milk and Reconstituted Milk

3. Referring to paragraph 3 of the notes of last meeting, Ms. S. C. CHEUNG reported that it was planned to table the proposed amendment to Cap. 132AF at the Legislative Council

(LegCo) in late 2011 and the provisions would take effect in early 2012. She suggested the trade to keep in view the development of that issue on Centre for Food Safety (CFS) website. The Chairman advised that the proposed amendment would be briefed again at Trade Consultation Forum (TCF) after it was tabled at LegCo.

### **Agenda Item 1**

#### **Progress of Small Volume Exemption Application**

4. Mr. W. K. CHENG reported that, as at 26 August 2011, about 40,800 applications for Small Volume Exemption were received. Among these applications, about 37,100 had been approved and about 2,000 rejected. There were 976 applications withdrawn. Applications pending processing were 217.

### **Agenda Item 2**

#### **Progress of Follow Up Actions on Plasticiser Contamination**

5. Ms. S. C. CHEUNG reported that, since outbreak of the incident on 23 May 2011 and up to 5 September 2011, a total of 941 samples had been collected. Apart from the 36 unsatisfactory samples as at 8.7.2011 reported in the last meeting, another 13 samples were found unsatisfactory during the period from 9.7.2011 to 5.9.2011 with the plasticisers of di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), di-isononyl phthalate (DINP) and di-butyl phthalate (DBP) amounting to a total of 49 unsatisfactory samples recorded and the number of Section 78B orders issued remained at six. The Chairman appealed to trade not to use raw materials that were suspected of contamination with plasticisers.

6. Trade representatives suggested and the meeting discussed the following:

- a) To list out the three action levels for actions against contamination of plasticisers on CFS website for reference of trade. The Chairman agreed to this suggestion.
- b) To advise the public on CFS website the level of DEHP, DINP or DBP that would be harmful to humans.
- c) To consider the action level on the basis of daily intake level for human consumption after discussing with the Expert Committee on Food Safety (ECFS). The Chairman advised that the action levels set for the three plasticisers had taken reference to the tolerable daily intake set out for them by World Health Organization (WHO) or European Food Safety Authority. The action levels currently adopted was numerically the same as those adopted by European Union (EU) in regulating migration of these substances from food contact materials. He said that these action levels were adequate to protect the health of Hong Kong citizens. Moreover, the current calculation for tolerable intake level had taken into account both the level of plasticiser contained in food and the consumption level of the food by the public. When the content level was found exceeding the level set out by EU, it was considered harmful to health. For some types of food where there were no data on the consumption level of the population, the calculation would take into account the quantity of such food consumed that would exceed the safety level to assess whether an average person might take such level of this food. For health food, usually a daily intake level is recommended. This level would be used for the estimation. He remarked that, as explained in the 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TCF, there were two degrees of actions: when the action level was exceeded to such level that public health was at risk, an order to prohibit the sale of the food would be

issued; when the action level was exceeded but public health might not be at risk, advice on not selling the food would be issued.

- d) To consider setting the action level for DBP in a range instead of at 0.3 parts per million (ppm) due to the difficulty encountered by many laboratories in testing plasticiser to such a low level. The Chairman advised that a conservative approach was adopted in setting the action level to protect the most vulnerable group of people. In this connection, the calculation would be conservative and it was not practicable to set a range for the purpose for protecting the most vulnerable group of people. Dr. S. M. CHOI noted that a number of laboratories in Hong Kong should be capable of determining 0.3 ppm DBP in food and hence he did not find the action level of 0.3 ppm was too low a level for laboratories to carry out testing. He was aware that the Hong Kong Accreditation Service has started accepting applications for laboratory accreditation of phthalate plasticisers in food and believed that the testing capability of private laboratories would improve.
- e) To seek the assistance of GL in laboratory testing for trade on plasticiser due to great variations in the testing results of private laboratories for this material. The Chairman agreed that testing of plasticiser was a new matter to many private laboratories yet this was only a transitional situation. With private laboratories being accredited, the situation should gradually be improved. Dr. S. M. CHOI commented that, based on his understanding, GL was responsible for providing laboratory testing to Government departments. It was only when there was a significant public interest then it might provide laboratory testing for private companies. He added that private laboratories would be more than willing to provide the laboratory service for the private sector. The Chairman supplemented that the Government had outsourced some of their laboratory testing work to private

laboratories.

- f) To advise the laboratory testing method for plasticiser and provide this information on CFS website. The Chairman suggested that trade representatives might refer to Posting-meeting Note under paragraph 16 of the Notes of 30<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TCF and agreed to upload this information on CFS website.

### **Agenda Item 3**

#### **Some Advice on Mushroom Poisoning**

7. Mr. Y. H. MA briefed the meeting about the administration arrangement for mushroom imported into Hong Kong from the Mainland. This was basically the same as that for vegetables. All vegetables, including mushroom, supplied to Hong Kong by the Mainland were subject to that control. Among the regulatory measures, there was requirement that vegetables supplied to Hong Kong by the Mainland must come from registered farms and processing enterprises. This must be proved with supporting documents on the products to ensure safety for consumption. Besides, labels must be attached to containers of vegetables to identify their origins for tracing the source in case of problems with them. In the Mainland, the regulatory authority undertook supervision and management on the origins and the related information was inspected and sealed. To control the route of import, the entry border point for vegetables to be transported into Hong Kong from the Mainland was set only at Man Kam To where there were random sample tests conducted by CFS. In case of problematic vegetables detected, the Mainland would be informed to take follow up actions to trace the source.

- 8. The Chairman referred to a leaflet tabled at the meeting and suggested trade to cook

mushroom thoroughly before consumption to prevent poisoning. Ms. S. C. CHEUNG advised that trade representatives might refer to the 61<sup>st</sup> issue of Food Safety Focus published in August 2011 on CFS website for information on precautionary measures to consume mushroom safely.

9. In reply to enquiry of trade representative, Mr. Y. H. MA advised that, for mushroom imported from countries other than the Mainland, traders might seek documents from the local authorities of these countries to certify that the mushroom was safe for human consumption.

#### **Agenda Item 4**

##### **Proposed Regulatory Framework for Pesticide Residues in Food in Hong Kong**

10. Ms. Joan YAU briefed the meeting about the progress of public consultation on the proposed regulatory framework for pesticide residues in food in Hong Kong or the Regulation on Pesticide Residues in Food (the proposed Regulation). She advised that the information that she was going to brief the meeting about was already explained and discussed in the technical meeting with trade held on 6 September 2011.

11. Ms. Joan YAU advised that public consultation on the proposed Regulation had started on 13 July 2011 and would last until 19 September 2011. So far three public forums had been held together with briefings at the Trade Consultation Forums and other meetings and consultation sessions. She briefed the meeting on three aspects of the proposed Regulation: salient features of the refined regulatory framework, consultation highlights and follow-up actions.



12. Ms. Joan YAU pointed out that salient features of the proposed Regulation were as follows:

- a) To define “pesticide” and other related terms in a way consistent with Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex);
- b) To provide a list of maximum residue limits (MRLs) and extraneous maximum residue limits (EMRLs), to adopt MRLs/EMRLs recommended by Codex as the backbone as well as the Codex’s classification of foods;
- c) To prohibit the import and sale of the concerned food for which no MRL/EMRL has been specified, unless Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene was satisfied that the detected level would not be dangerous or prejudicial to health;
- d) To provide a list of exempted substances;
- e) To accept applications for adding/revising MRLs and exempted substances;
- f) To dovetail the proposed Regulation with the registration of pesticides for use on food crops under the Pesticides Ordinance (Cap. 133); and
- g) To commence the proposed Regulation after a two-year grace period.

13. Ms. Joan YAU highlighted and elaborated on the points in the public consultation on the proposed Regulation covering the following:

- a) Related to food and the scope of regulation – What is food? How to reduce dietary intake of pesticide residues?
- b) Related to compliance and enforcement – How to deal with pesticide-food pair without specified MRL? How to deal with the residue limits for pesticide residues

in processed food? Did a trader need to test all the 300 plus pesticides in the list in order to comply with the proposed Regulation? Any recommended test methods for the 300 plus pesticides? How would CFS collect food samples for testing in order to monitor pesticide residues in food? Penalty was too lenient or too stringent?

- c) Others – The required documentation for the application for adding/revising a MRL and adding an exempted substance and comments on MRLs for specific pesticide-food pairs.

14. Ms. Joan YAU advised that, although public consultation on the proposed Regulation would end on 19 September 2011, consideration of comments on MRLs/EMRLs for specific pesticide-food pairs were ongoing. It was planned to table the proposed Regulation in the Legislative Council towards the end of 2011. The CFS would work with the trade and develop relevant documents, in the form of either guidelines or Questions and Answers, to familiarize the trade with the proposed Regulation. In the pipeline included those on Food Classification (draft outline was available on CFS website for reference of trade), application for revising/adding MRLs/EMRLs and adding exempted substances, complying with the new regulatory requirements.

15. A trade representative concerned that the list of MRLs/EMRLs had not covered all the MRLs/EMRLs for soya bean adopted by Codex and other major food exporting countries to Hong Kong and sought advice on the following:

- a) Whether there were guidelines to inform trade the method of risk assessment so as to remove uncertainties arising from pesticide residues that fell outside the list of

MRLs/EMRLs under the proposed Regulation.

- b) Whether it was practicable for trade to seek application to amend the list of MRLs/EMRLs in view of the need of much documentation to support the application.
- c) Whether the standards on pesticide residues in overseas countries would be accepted in Hong Kong in view that it would be difficult for exporters in these countries to comply with the regulation in Hong Kong.

16. Ms. Joan YAU responded that soya bean imported into Hong Kong should comply with MRLs/EMRLs specified for soya bean, as well as the food group it belonged to, i.e., pulses. On the residue definition in other countries, it should tally with standards of Codex; if not, the relevant MRLs/EMRLs would not be adopted in Hong Kong. When there were no MRLs/EMRLs specified in the proposed Regulation, risk assessment would be required. As mentioned in the technical meeting held on 6 September 2011, further details on risk assessment would be provided to the trade in due course. In addition, the World Trade Organization had been informed of the proposed Regulation and the proposed Regulation had been circulated among consulates of countries with exportation of food to Hong Kong for their views. Our major trading partners had therefore been informed and consulted with our proposed regulatory requirement.

17. The Chairman supplemented that all products exported to Hong Kong should comply with the local regulation. This principle was not applicable only to pesticide residues. The same principle also applied to other items, such as food additives. He remarked that traders should import food products complying with the list of MRLs/EMRLs. In case there were imported products with pesticide residues not on the list of MRLs/EMRLs, risk assessment

would be conducted. He said that the majority of imported products, which met the standards on pesticide residues of the countries exporting them, should be able to comply with the proposed Regulation. He shared with the views that it was quite expensive in applying for amendments to the list of MRLs/EMRLs, but the fee charged was calculated based on a cost-recovery principle.

18. A trade representative sought advice on whether there were solutions to the problems of importing certain Chinese leafy vegetables, such as pak choi, from the Mainland, where there were no specific MRLs/EMRLs under Codex and concerned about the adoption of all MRLs/EMRLs in the Mainland to the Hong Kong list. Ms. Joan YAU advised that, for certain Chinese leafy vegetables, say pak choi, belonged to the food subgroup “Brassica leafy vegetables”, which came under a food group “leafy vegetables” according to the Codex’s food classification and therefore pak choi should comply with relevant MRLs/EMRLs for pak choi, brassica leafy vegetables as well as leafy vegetables under the proposed Regulation. She added that the Ministry of Agriculture in the Mainland had promulgated quite a number of standards in 2010 and more were expected to come. This should resolve the concerns related to MRLs/EMRLs for leafy vegetables imported from the Mainland. She pointed out that the Mainland was chairing the Codex Committee on Pesticide Residues and was tactful in observing internationally agreed principle of setting MRLs/EMRLs. For the purpose of setting up Hong Kong’s MRL/EMRLs, principally the national standards of the Mainland, together with those adopted from the USA and Thailand would be considered and incorporated after thoroughly scrutinized by risk assessment.

19. A trade representative sought advice on the reporting limits for pesticide residues that were not on the list of MRLs/EMRLs. Dr. S. M. CHOI advised that the reporting limit

adopted by laboratories should depend on the toxicity of the particular pesticide residue. For relatively less toxic pesticides, a reporting limit of 0.1 ppm for vegetable samples might be considered. However, for pesticides of higher toxicities, a lower reporting limit might be required. If a pesticide residue was suspected to be present in a food sample and the pesticide had no specified MRLs/EMRLs in the proposed regulation, the trade, when deciding the required reporting limit for that pesticide, could make reference to the relevant toxicological data and safety reference values of the pesticide concerned as well as the relevant MRLs/EMRLs established in overseas jurisdiction. If there were questions from food manufacturers on the existence of certain pesticide residues in their food products, manufacturers could seek the advice of the food ingredient supplier. Dr. Teresa CHOI supplemented that there was a technical meeting to examine issues that might arise from implementing the proposed Regulation. She remarked that the Government Laboratory (GL) had already carried out two workshops for laboratories on the testing method and technical issues related to pesticide residues and GL had indicated that more briefing sessions could be organized if necessary. She pointed out that, in line with international practice, it would not be advisable to set up a cut-off value for determining pesticide residue levels that were not listed on the MRL/EMRL schedule.

20. A trade representative sought advice on the principle of setting MRLs/EMRLs. She understood that the standards of Codex were the backbone, to be followed by those of the Mainland, United States of America and Thailand and in this descending order of priorities and sought advice on the final list of MRLs/EMRLs. She also enquired about when the updated set of MRLs/EMRLs would be available.

21. Ms Joan YAU informed that the same principle would be applied during the updating

exercise, and the updated list would be derived with reference to the standards listed in the powerpoint presentation. The Chairman supplemented that the list of MRLs/EMRLs for the proposed Regulation would be ready before tabling at the LegCo by end of 2011. He expected that it was highly likely that the list of MRLs/EMRLs would be longer and not likely to become shorter.

## **Agenda Item 5**

### **Draft Trade Guideline for Reducing Sodium in Foods**

22. Dr. Violette LIN briefed the meeting about the draft Trade Guidelines for Reducing Sodium in Foods. The guidelines were drafted by a working group. They were intended for all traders manufacturing and selling foods and were aimed at helping them to produce and promote wholesome and safe products that contain lower sodium or salt content. The draft guidelines had been uploaded to CFS's website and were divided into six parts.

23. Dr. Violette LIN continued to explain in details on the two pieces of advice on manufacturing / producing foods with lower sodium / salt content and promoting foods with lower sodium / salt content as provided in the draft tabled at the meeting. For sourcing / targeting for ingredients / foods, the following were suggested to traders:

- a) Choose ingredients with lower sodium with information from suppliers, nutrition labels and food composition databases;
- b) Use sodium reduction targets as a guide to purchase or import ingredients / foods;
- c) Establish a database to monitor sodium content in foods; and
- d) Set individual sodium reduction targets for various food categories, if possible.

24. Dr. Violette LIN elaborated the following suggestions to traders for practicing reduction sodium in food:

- a) Adhere to Good Manufacturing Practice when using salt / sodium / seasonings but not exceeding reduction targets;
- b) Provide trainings and re-trainings to cooks / chefs / product developers on healthy eating and healthier options of food products;
- c) Reduce salt content of food supply in a stepwise manner according to the characteristics of individual food products;
- d) Provide more unsalted or low salt, and iodised salt as well if possible, offer options for customers to choose and add salt / seasonings only upon request;
- e) Use fresh, reduced-salt canned veggies / meats to replace pickles / preserved meats, or natural ingredients to replace high salt seasonings / sauce;
- f) Use natural ingredients / herbs / spices for flavouring and marinating;
- g) Provide seasonings in separate packages;
- h) Offer a range of portion sizes of products;
- i) Make iodised salt available; and
- j) Follow WHO's guidelines on iodisation, i.e. 20-40 mg iodine per kg of salt.

25. Dr. Violette LIN continued with the following as promotion materials for the reduction of sodium in food:

- a) Indicate sodium content of various dishes / products on company's website / promotion materials;

- b) Provide leaflets / reading materials on harmful effects of excessive sodium intake from all sources; and
- c) Follow WHO's advice by restricting marketing or advertising foods / beverages that were high in sodium, such as exceeding 600mg/100g, to children.

26. Dr. Violette LIN explained the following measures by means of information on products to traders for promoting the reduction of sodium in food:

- a) Declare sodium content and provide conversion factor between salt and sodium;
- b) If meeting the conditions, make the "free", "low", "very low" sodium / salt claims accordingly; and
- c) Declare clearly on food label if the salt had been substituted and place legible warning statements (Referring to a question in paragraph 25 on Notes of 29<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Trade Consultation Forum), as per advice of medical doctor.
- d) Products that were naturally high in salt and could not meaningfully be reformulated to add warning statements, such as “WHO recommends sodium less than 2,000 mg/day”, and indicate the sodium intake when one serving was consumed. This served the purpose of providing informed choice to consumers. For the definition of “one serving size”, traders might refer to “Trade Guidelines on Serving Size of Prepackaged Food For Nutrition Labelling” published by CFS in July 2011; and
- e) Fast food / restaurant chains to provide voluntarily sodium content of food products on menu, food label, price list, etc, as a symbol.

27. Dr. Violette LIN also reported the following suggestions on other promotion activities



to promote the reduction of sodium in food:

- a) Provide incentives, such as cash coupons, to encourage patrons to purchase / order foods with lower sodium / salt;
- b) Designate a period of time or a corner in the shop to promote foods with lower sodium / salt;
- c) Encourage cooks / chefs / frontline staff to provide guidance to customers on choosing foods with lower sodium / salt;
- d) Place condiments / sauce in smaller containers or remove them from the table and only present upon request;
- e) Submit voluntarily the nutrition information of snacks, including sodium, to Hong Kong Nutrition Association's "Database of Prepackaged Snacks"; and
- f) Introduce reformulated products with lower sodium in local newspaper's health sections.

28. Dr. Violette LIN advised that consultation of trade for the draft trade guidelines for reducing sodium in foods would last until 10 October 2011. Meanwhile, trade representatives were invited to join the Working Group (WG) for Trade Guidelines on reducing Sugars / Fats in Foods. It was planned to hold the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of this WG in the second half of September 2011. The Chairman remarked that trade was welcomed to offer their views on the draft trade guidelines. Those who were interested in joining the WG might contact the Secretary of the meeting for arrangements.

29. A trade representative opined that the recommendations of using salt substitutes / enhancers, which were noted from Annex III of the draft trade guidelines, needed to be

cautioned. The public should be reminded when using reduced sodium products. The Chairman shared the opinions.

30. A trade representative sought advice on whether the warning notice on label for use of salt substitutes / enhancers and potassium chloride was mandatory or voluntary. The Chairman advised that this was on a voluntary basis.

31. The Chairman advised that the draft Trade Guideline on Reducing Salt in Food was uploaded onto CFS website on 8 September 2011 for ease of reference of trade.

#### **Agenda Item 6**

#### **Microbiological Quality of Non-prepackaged Beverages Mixed or Topped with Solid Ingredients in Hong Kong**

32. Dr. Ken CHONG briefed the meeting about a risk assessment (RA) study on microbiological quality of non-prepackaged beverages (NPB) mixed or topped with solid ingredients in Hong Kong. The study aimed at providing an overview of the microbiological quality of some cold-served NPB mixed or topped with solid ingredients commonly available in retail outlets. These NPB might be of variable microbiological quality due to the preparation of ingredients or toppings in advance and in confined areas in some takeaway shops. Around 200 samples NPB were collected.

33. Dr. Ken CHONG continued that, due to the diversity of cold-served NPB available in the market, this study focused on NPB that contained solid ingredients or toppings while excluding beverages that were permitted to be sold with a non-bottled drinks permit,

belonged to frozen confection and considered as of lower microbiological risk, such as hot-served beverages (hot drinks), yoghurt containing beverages, etc. The microbiological quality was assessed in accordance with the Microbiological Guidelines for Ready-to-eat Food. Majority (92.4%) of these samples were of Class A or Class B microbiological quality. No samples were found to be of Class D which meant the presence of unacceptable levels of specific pathogens. The remaining 7.6% samples were found to have Class C microbiological quality and these were attributed to excessive ACC. Excessive ACC did not indicate an immediate risk to public health but indicated sub-optimal hygienic conditions and further improvement on the hygienic conditions was required. Further analysis showed that samples containing dairy ingredients or red/green beans were more likely to have excessive ACC.

34. Dr. Ken CHONG summarised that, judging from the results of the study, these ingredients might be the potential risk factors associated with NPB. For dairy ingredients, it was suspected that the excessive ACC might be attributed to the prolonged storage of processed milk after opening or the milk tea prepared in advance. Red / green beans were either cooked in advance or canned. The results of higher ACC associated with red / green beans might be attributed to using them for several days and exposure to abuse temperature during the period. Pearl tapioca appeared to have better microbiological quality than red / green beans, which might be due to the fact that they were freshly prepared everyday and were not stored for long period of time. There were around 25% of NPB samples contained raw fruit ingredients but none were found to be of Class C or Class D microbiological quality. Such result was in line with previous RA study on pre-cut fruit where no samples were found to be unsatisfactory.

35. Dr. Ken CHONG added that a set of Trade Guidelines on Safe Production of NPB was formulated and this was tabled at the meeting with the draft uploaded on CFS website for comments. Trade members were welcomed to comment on the guidelines within one month.

#### **Agenda Item 7**

#### **Impact of Nutrition Labelling Scheme on the Food Choice of Individuals with Food Allergy**

36. Ms. Melissa LIU advised the meeting about findings on the impact of Nutrition Labelling (NL) Scheme on the choice of food for individuals with food allergy. It was noted that there were fluctuations with the supplies of food for individuals with food allergy for one to two weeks immediately before and after the NL Scheme took effect on 1 July 2010. The situation had subsequently resumed to normal. Adequate information was provided on the package of such food that was found useful to this group of individuals. Currently, these individuals said that there were more choices of such food especially in the high end food outlets and in specialized shops. The price of such food was not much affected by the implementation of the NL Scheme. Overall speaking, they found that the NL Scheme was beneficial to them and their choices were not reduced. On the other hand, there was useful information for their reference in making choices.

37. Ms. Melissa LIU continued that individuals with food allergy expected the trade should try their best to declare clearly the information related to food allergy including the food composition or raw materials involved in the production of food on their package, so that individuals with food allergy could identify raw materials that they were allergic and not allergic to. They also expected that the warning notice on allergens should be applied

rationality. Warning notice on allergens applied across the board instead of appropriately would only cause confusion to them and greatly limit their food choice.

### **Any Other Business**

#### **A Brief of Thirty-fourth Session of Codex Alimentarius Commission**

38. Mr. W. Y. CHAN briefed the meeting about the thirty-fourth session of Codex Alimentarius Commission held between 4 and 9 July 2011 at Geneva, Switzerland. He advised that, in this session, a total of 57 standards, Code of Practice (CoP) and Guidelines (GLs) were adopted, revoked or discontinued. In summary, they include:

- a) Food Additives – Maximum levels (MLs) of 10 food additives were adopted and MLs of 4 food additives were revoked;
- b) Pesticides Residues in Food – About 320 new MRLs of 25 pesticides were adopted and about 80 existing MRLs of 13 pesticides were revoked. As advised by Ms. Joan YAU, these would be included in the proposed Regulation;
- c) Veterinary Drugs Residues in Food – 12 new MRLs of 2 veterinary drugs were adopted;
- d) Contaminants in Food – Code of Practice (CoP) for the prevention and reduction of ethyl carbamate in stone fruit distillates was newly adopted. This CoP provided national and local authorities, manufacturers and other relevant bodies with guidance to prevent and/or reduce formation of ethyl carbamate in stone fruit distillates;
- e) Food Microbiological Safety – The Guidelines (GLs) for the control of *campylobacter* and *salmonella spp.* in chicken meat were adopted. These GLs provided guidance to governments and industry on the control of *campylobacter*

- and *salmonella spp.* in chicken meat and these were applied to all steps in a “primary production-to-consumption” food chain for chicken meat production; and
- f) Food Microbiological Safety – There was a newly adopted revision of the Recommended International Code of Hygiene Practice for Collecting, Processing and Marketing of Natural Mineral Waters (CHP). This revised CHP provided recommended hygienic practices for collecting natural mineral waters, their treatment, bottling, packaging, storage, transport, distribution and sale for direct consumption, to the government and industry. Mr. W. Y. CHAN pointed out that the most important issue related to the local situation was the revised microbiological criteria in the CHP. He continued that CFS was revising the local microbiological guidelines for mineral water which would take into consideration the revised microbiological criteria.

The full report of the thirty-fourth session was available on the official Codex website for reference.

39. The Chairman advised that the revision to the local microbiological guidelines was in progress and would be completed in 2012. Trade would be consulted of the revisions.

40. A trade representative sought advice on the timetable for revising the level of metallic contamination in food regulation, such as cadmium, as there were discrepancies between the Codex and the local ones. The Chairman advised that the revision to the level of metallic contamination in food regulation had been agreed by the Expert Committee on Food Safety in its meeting held in June 2011. This was accorded the third priority after revising pesticide residues in food and veterinary drugs residues in food. A working group for the

purpose had been set up and met in early August 2011. Basically, the Codex standards would be adopted as far as possible. The actual amendments to the current regulation might take three years before the process of amendments could be completed. Meanwhile, the current standards stipulated in law should be observed and would be enforced.

### **Food Safety Charter**

41. Mr. Nicky HO briefed the meeting about development in Food Safety Charter (FSC). FSC was jointly developed by CFS and food trade in 2008 aiming at promoting to food trade with food safety as the core value with a view to providing quality services to customers. Signatories to FSC undertook to support FSC, keep themselves abreast of the development in food safety and promote the positive image of food trade. They were issued with a certificate and a sticker for displaying at their outlets or venues. Signatories would also implement risk management measures at their outlets such as keeping records on raw materials, separation of raw and cooked food and providing suitable cleansing equipment and protective tools to their staff for good personal hygiene.

42. Mr. Nicky HO continued that two newsletters had been issued in the past year to inform signatories of activities under FSC, new legislation and amendments to current legislation on food safety as well as trade guidelines and publications newly published by the CFS. Moreover, an annual meeting for FSC was held in February 2011 at YMCA of Hong Kong. Food safety experts and signatories of FSC were invited to share their expertise and experiences in applying food safety management system such as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system and ISO 22000 for managing food safety at this event.

43. Mr. Nicky HO pointed out that efforts had been put in through many channels to

promote the FSC and food safety to the public. In the last two issues of Food Safety Bulletin, a new column “News on New Dishes” had been added to invite signatories to introduce hints and safety in preparing new cuisines. In parallel, there was roving exhibition around districts with a new set of exhibition boards to inform the public of FSC. At the roving exhibition, signatories and their particulars located in the district concerned where roving exhibition was held were displayed to visitors. On CFS website, a list of all signatories with searching function was provided therein to facilitate the public in searching different signatories. Meanwhile, a mobile application for FSC was being developed. It was anticipated, upon completion by end of 2011, to enable the public to locate the signatories and check their details through the smart phone.

44. Mr. Nicky HO advised that, while FSC was stepping into the 4<sup>th</sup> year, signatories who had become signatories for consecutive three years, starting from 2009, would be granted an Award under the recognition scheme to recognize their continuous and active support.

45. Mr. Nicky HO said that the number of signatories had increased continuously since its establishment. There were 2,088 signatories signing up to the FSC last year. He appealed to trade representatives to sign up to the FSC and a table was set up outside the meeting venue for this purpose.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

46. Trade representatives would be notified of the date of next meeting.

47. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.