

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Notes of the Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum
held on 10 November 2010 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)	
Mr. K. M. LIU	Superintendent (Import/Export) ³	
Ms. Janny MA	Scientific Officer (Food Additives)	
Ms. Melva CHEN	Scientific Officer (Chemicals)	
Mr. C. L. CHIU	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling)	
Ms. L. Y. POON	Senior Health Inspector (Food Safety Promotion)	
Ms. S. W. CHUNG	Superintendent (Risk Communication)	(Secretary)

Trade Representatives

Mr. Peter JOHNSTON	A & W Food Service Ltd.
Ms. Lina LIM	A.S. Watson Group (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Brian CHEUNG	A.S. Watson Industries
Ms. Christy CHEUNG	A.S. Watson Industries
Ms. Jill LEUNG	A-1 Bakery Co., (HK) Ltd.
Ms. Caroline YUEN	American Consulate General HK
Mr. Raymond YAM	Arome Bakery
Mr. WONG Kai Man	Calbee
Mr. TSANG Wa Him	Calbee
Ms. Ming CHEUNG	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Mr. Tommy CHAU	China Inspection Co., Ltd.
Mr. Alvin WONG	China Inspection Co., Ltd.
Mr. Dennis CHAN	Citysuper Ltd.

Mr. Mann HUI	CMA Testing and Certification Laboratories
Mr. Lewis TSANG	CMA Testing and Certification Laboratories
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.
Mr. Sam CHAN	Dah Chong Hong Ltd.
Ms. Mandy LAM	DCH Food Mart
Mr. LAI Po Wing	DCH Food Mart
Ms. NG Wai Kee	Fairwood Holdings Ltd.
Ms. YU Pui Chi	Fleishman-Hillard
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodsan Analytics Ltd.
Ms. Ramon AU	GlaxoSmithKline Ltd.
Ms. Grace CHAN	GlaxoSmithKline Ltd.
Mr. LEUNG Yiu Hung	H. K. Yamazaki Baking Co., Ltd.
Mr. Allen PANG	Home of Swallows Ltd.
Mr. Allen WONG	Hong Kong Food Science and Technology Association
Ms. MAN Ka Mun	Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education
Ms. Catherine CHING	Institution of Dining Art
Mr. Kelvin YAU	Institution of Dining Art
Mr. Ricky LEUNG	Institution of Dining Art
Ms. Alice WONG	Lee Kum Kee Int'l Holdings Ltd.
Mr. Elvis NG	Marks and Spencer (AP) Ltd.
Ms. HO Caroline	Maxim's Caterers Ltd.
Mr. Raymond YAM	Maxim's Caterers Ltd.
Ms. Helen CHEUNG	McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd.
Ms. LO Wai Ming	McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Albert XU	Microfood Consulting
Ms. German CHEUNG	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Mr. Kit LAM	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Ms. Cactus LAI	ParknShop
Ms. Mabel LEUNG	ParknShop
Mr. Chris CHAN	Pat Chun Int'l Ltd.
Ms. Jenny CHAN	Pfizer Corporation H.K. Ltd.
Ms. LAW Man Yee	Procter & Gamble HK Ltd.
Ms. YU Grace	Procter & Gamble HK Ltd.
Ms. Stephanie SHUM	Saint Honore Cake Shop Ltd.
Mr. Jimmy FUNG	Saraya H.K. Co., Ltd.
Ms. WONG Siu Yuk	Sincere United Ltd.
Mr. K.C. WONG	Swire Coca-Cola HK
Mr. Victor KOK	Tai Pan Bread & Cakes Co., Ltd.

Mr. James HO	The Asia Provisions Co., Ltd.
Ms. May LO	The Dairy Farm Co., Ltd. - Wellcome
Mr. Allen HO	The Dairy Farm Group
Mr. Samuel CHAN	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Kiwi YEUNG	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Mr. Douglas CHENG	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Wing CHEUNG	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. CHAN Chi Kong	Vitasoy Int'l Holding Ltd.
Mr. Stephen CHOI	Wing Wah Manufactory Ltd.
Mr. Philip KWAN	Wrigley Asia Pacific

Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all trade representatives and introduced government representatives to the meeting. He advised that Dr. Teresa CHOI was handling the regulatory issue of pesticide residues in food.

Confirmation of the Notes of Last Meeting

2. The notes of last meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Agenda Item 1

Matters Arising from Notes of Last Meeting

Progress of Working Group on Nutrition Labelling

Progress of Applications for Small Volume Exemption

3. Mr. C. L. CHIU reported that, as at 29 October 2010, about 32,200 applications for SVE were received. Among these applications, about 29,400 had been approved and about 1,700 rejected. There were 700 applications withdrawn.

Enforcement of Nutrition Labelling

4. The Chairman noted that the compliance with Nutrition Labelling (NL) legislation was over 99% and he thanked trade for the efforts in the matter. However, he noticed that there was room for improvement with shops of ethnic minorities. He appealed to trade to pay attention to the matter.

5. The Chairman reminded the meeting that the NL Scheme also regulated nutrient claims as some claims were found problematic. In fact, the regulation covered food products intended for consumption of human over age of 3, including formula milk powder for children. In addition, misleading claims on food products for children younger than 36 months old come under regulation of other existing legislation.

Microbiological Guidelines for Bottled Water

6. The Chairman advised that pseudomonas aeruginosa had been adopted as one of the parameters in the daily testing of bottled water. The recent report on study of bottled water had included pseudomonas aeruginosa in the testing. Upon enquiry, he undertook to share with the meeting on the testing method for pseudomonas aeruginosa after seeking advice of Department of Health.

Agenda Item 2

Draft Trade Guidelines on Reducing Acrylamide in Food

7. Ms. Janny MA briefed the meeting about the draft “Trade Guidelines on Reducing Acrylamide in Food”. The guidelines drafted by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) were intended to provide recommendations to trade in minimising the formation of acrylamide in food, mainly potato and cereal based products. These guidelines were prepared by making reference to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) Code of Practice for the Reduction of Acrylamide in Foods (CAC/RCP 67-2009) and were applicable to all manufacturers and caterers especially those producing high temperature processed potato and / or cereal based products. Acrylamide was found in certain types of food prepared / cooked at high temperature by the Swedish National Food Administration in 2002. Acrylamide was not added intentionally to food but formed typically in plant commodities high in carbohydrates and low in protein, i.e. potatoes and cereal products, subject to high temperature at or exceeding 120 °C. Acrylamide was formed during the Maillard reactions when the free non-essential amino acid asparagine reacted with reducing sugars especially glucose and fructose.

8. Ms. Janny MA continued that the international concern on acrylamide were on its toxicity. There was evidence that acrylamide would damage the nervous system in human and induced gene mutation and cause cancers in experimental animals. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) had classified acrylamide as “probably carcinogenic to human” (Group 2A). She advised that the draft guidelines had introduced three general strategies i.e. raw materials, recipes and food processing conditions to reduce the acrylamide

level in food. She went through these three strategies in details with the meeting.

9. Ms. Janny MA pointed out that there was no single solution to reduce acrylamide level in food. In adopting measures to reduce acrylamide, the chemical and microbiological safety of the food should not be compromised. Attention should be paid to the possibility that changes in product composition and / or processing might affect the nutritional quality, the organoleptic properties and consumer acceptability. For this reason, the trade should carry out thorough evaluation of the proposed interventions before making any changes to avoid creating a potentially larger risk. She advised that the draft guidelines would be uploaded to the CFS website for consultation. The trade was welcomed to offer their views on the draft guidelines until end of December 2010. The finalised version would be placed on the CFS website and widely distributed to trade for reference.

10. Views on the draft “Trade Guidelines on Reducing Acrylamide in Food “ exchanged at the meeting were as follows:

- a) Was there an international acceptable level available for acrylamide in food – The Chairman advised that there was no acceptable level set for acrylamide in food. The Codex was encouraging their member states to urge their traders to take appropriate actions in reducing acrylamide in food. They would re-visit the issue in two or three years’ time to find out whether the trade had taken any actions in reducing the level; if not, they might consider regulating acrylamide in food. Ms. Janny MA advised that the acrylamide level in food should be as low as reasonably possible.

- b) Were there any recommended value set for different types of food in the draft guidelines– The Chairman emphasised that the acrylamide level in food should be as low as reasonably possible. The draft guidelines had incorporated the acrylamide levels found previously in some local food products. Members of the trade could make comparison between those levels with their own product values.
- c) Suggestion to include corn based products in the guidelines – A trade representative noticed that under heating processing corn and other plant materials might form acrylamide. It was suggested including ways to reduce acrylamide in corn based products in the guidelines. Ms. Janny MA advised that cereal products including corn based products were applicable to the guidelines.
- d) The possible hazard of potato and noodles cooked in hot pot – Ms. Janny MA advised that significant formation of acrylamide generally required a processing temperature of 120°C or higher. It was therefore consuming potato and noodles cooked in hot pot was of limited risk raised from acrylamide as boiling temperature was only 100°C.
- e) Laboratory analysis for acrylamide in food for trade – The Chairman commented that since there was no regulatory control of acrylamide in Hong Kong, laboratory services for acrylamide testing provided in local laboratories might not be as common as other regulated parameters. Supplementary information regarding the laboratory testing of acrylamide in food would be provided at the next meeting.

[Post-meeting Note: There is a new fast screening test kit available in the market recently to determine acrylamide but with limited information. Alternatively, Liquid Chromatography with Tandem Mass Spectrometry Detection provides confirmative and quantitative acrylamide analysis within a few days. Traders are advised to approach individual testing laboratory for acrylamide analysis.]

- f) The regulatory control of acrylamide in drinking water – The Chairman advised that the regulatory control of acrylamide level in drinking water fell under the purview of the Water Services Department.

11. The Chairman remarked that there was international concern on the level of acrylamide in food. A recent risk assessment study revealed that the dietary exposure to acrylamide in the Hong Kong population was of concern. For the sake of public health, he wished the trade to undertake measures to reduce acrylamide in food.

Agenda Item 3

Study on Safety of Melamine-ware available for Use on Local Food Premises

12. Ms. Melva CHEN briefed the meeting about the study on the safety of melamine-ware available for use on local food premises. Melamine-ware referred to tableware made of melamine – formaldehyde resins intended for repeated use. Such tableware was widely used around the world as it was economical, durable, and not broken easily. It was also of good chemical stability and heat resistance. However, there were safety concern on melamine-ware due to the possible migration of residues of formaldehyde and melamine left

in the finished products into foodstuffs and the excessive migration of formaldehyde and melamine arising from the improper use of melamine-ware. She advised that melamine was of low acute toxicity. IARC listed it under Group 3: not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to human. In light of the 2008 incident where kidney stones were formed in infants and children following consumption of infant milk and milk products with high levels of melamine, the World Health Organization had established a Tolerable Daily Intake for melamine at 0.2mg / kg body weight. She continued that small amount of formaldehyde was found naturally in raw foods, such as fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, crustaceans, etc. A large amount of formaldehyde could cause acute toxicity, such as severe abdominal pain, vomiting, coma, renal injury, with possible death.

13. Ms. Melva CHEN advised that the objectives of the study were to examine the level of migration of melamine and formaldehyde from melamine-ware available for use on local food premises and to assess the safety of such ware. The scope of the study included bowls, plates, cups, spoons, ladles, etc. made of melamine-formaldehyde resins for repeated-use on local food premises and they were all new unused. She went through details of the sampling method, laboratory analysis and testing results with the meeting.

14. Ms. Melva CHEN continued that there were low levels of migration of melamine and formaldehyde even under worse-case scenario for all melamine-ware samples tested and these were well below the migration limits specified under the China national standard (GB) and by European Union (EU). She advised that all melamine-ware samples tested were suitable for food use. They were not expected to pose health concern to consumers under proper food use.

15. Ms. Melva CHEN also advised that restaurants and food businesses should obtain melamine-ware from reliable manufacturers and suppliers and use melamine-ware of suitable quality to serve food to customers. They should use melamine-ware according to the product specifications and instructions. For manufacturers, they should adopt good manufacturing practices in making melamine-ware for food use and provide instructions on its intended use. For suppliers, they should obtain melamine-ware products from reliable manufacturers and ensure the products were of suitable quality for food use. Taking the opportunity, Ms. Melva CHEN thanked the Hong Kong Federation of Restaurants and Related Trades Limited for rendering assistance in the study.

16. Views on the study exchanged at the meeting were as follows:

- a) Was there an increase in the migration of formaldehyde and melamine under heating conditions – Ms. Mevla CHEN advised that, in theory, there was an inclination of higher migration of impurities from polymer under higher temperature.
- b) Did the testing conducted in the study involve melamine-ware holding real hot food, such as hot congee – Ms. Mevla CHEN advised that the testing was conducted in accordance with standards of GB and EU and under severe environment, i.e. acidic and high temperature during a certain period of time. The circumstances of melamine-ware holding hot congee was covered in the testing process.
- c) Was there study on the long term impact of using melamine-ware on the health

and physical growth of children after extended use – The Chairman advised that, with contemporary information on hand, when melamine-ware was used in accordance with GB and standards of EU and under safety precautions, it was unlikely that it would pose any risk to the health and growth of different age groups of human.

17. The Chairman remarked that the study found melamine-ware in use by trade on local food premises were generally safe and able to comply with requirements. Nevertheless, attention should still be paid on the quality of such ware and their usage, in particular the change of quality and their proper use. This was attributed to that a change of quality of such ware might affect their safety and improper use of these wares might also cause problems. Most important, use of such ware should be confined to under suitable temperature. When used under very high temperature, they might melt down. He reminded the meeting that, apart from melamine-ware, attention should also be paid to the safety of other food contact materials, such as materials that were exported from China and imported to EU as discussed in the last meeting of TCF.

Agenda Item 4

Introduction of Technical Meeting on Regulation of Pesticide Residues in Food in Hong Kong

18. Ms. L. Y. POON introduced to the meeting technical meeting on the proposed regulatory framework for pesticide residues in food in Hong Kong. She explained that the objectives of the proposed regulatory framework were to better protect public health, facilitate effective regulatory control and promote harmonisation between local and international standards.

The background might trace back to the public consultation from 13 November 2007 to 31 January 2008 and the Regional Symposium on Regulation of Pesticide Residues in Food held on 27 and 28 March 2009. Subsequently, there was further refinement of the regulatory framework and establishment of proposed Maximum Residual Levels. A technical meeting would be held to communicate the refined regulatory framework with trade before public consultation and discuss issues relevant to the future implementation of the regulation. Details on the enrolment to the technical meeting would be provided later through various channels. She invited interested trade representatives to fill in the enrolment form tabled at the meeting and return it to CFS after the meeting for early enrolment.

19. Dr. Teresa CHOI supplemented that the proposed regulatory framework was drawn up on the basis of the public consultation in 2007. Reference had been made on the experience of other countries and views had been exchanged with overseas experts at the regional symposium held in 2009. The pesticides to be regulated were based on the public consultation document published in 2007 with some refinement and updates. Traders might refer to the list of pesticides in the document for reference on those pesticides that would come under regulation. The Chairman advised that the technical meeting would hold its first meeting in December 2010. He anticipated that the proposed legislation on the regulation would be submitted to the Legislative Council for consideration before end of 2011. He extended his invitation to trade representatives to enroll to the technical meeting.

Agenda Item 5

Any Other Business

Formation of Working Groups on Reduction of Sodium, Sugar and Fat in Food

20. The Chairman informed the meeting that two working groups would be formed with trade and other experts to discuss and prepare guidelines for reference of trade on the reduction of sodium, sugar and fat in food. One working group would focus on the reduction of sodium and another on sugar and fat. He cordially invited trade representatives to enroll to these two working groups.

Addition of Permitted Antioxidant in Hong Kong

21. A trade representative noticed that EU had adopted "Rosemary Extract" as one of the permitted antioxidants at end of October 2010. She sought advice on whether the same item would be added on the list of permitted antioxidants in Hong Kong. The Chairman advised that the legislation on permitted antioxidants in Hong Kong was enacted two years ago and came into force on 1 July 2010. It would normally take some time to amend the legislation unless there was high risk to public health. The removal of an item from the list of permitted antioxidants could take reference to the practice of an individual country. However, the addition of one would have to make reference to the practice of Codex and after observing the international development.

Date of Next Meeting

22. The next meeting would be held on 17 December 2010.

23. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.