

**Centre for Food Safety**  
**Food and Environmental Hygiene Department**  
**Notes of the Twenty-seventh Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum**  
**held on 17 December 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)	
Dr. Janet KWAN	Senior Medical Officer (Risk Assessment)	
Mr. M. L. KWAN	Superintendent (Import/Export) <sup>2</sup>	
Ms. Janny MA	Scientific Officer (Food Additives)	
Dr. Ken CHONG	Scientific Officer (Microbiology)	
Ms. Melva CHEN	Scientific Officer (Chemicals)	
Mr. C. L. CHIU	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling)	
Ms. S. W. CHUNG	Superintendent (Risk Communication)	(Secretary)

**Trade Representatives**

Ms. Cactus LAI	A.S Watson Group (HK) Limited
Mr. FUNG Kwok Keung	A.S. Watson Industries
Mr. Brian CHEUNG	A.S. Watson Industries
Ms. Caroline YUEN	American Consulate General Hong Kong
Mr. Lawrence WONG	Calbee Four Seas Co., Ltd.
Ms. Ming CHEUNG	Campbell Soup Asia Limited
Ms. Dora YIN	Cerebos (Hong Kong) Limited
Ms. Grace YEE	CitySuper Limited
Mr. Dennis CHAN	CitySuper Limited
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.
Ms. LAW Miu Ha	Dah Chong Hong Kong Food Marts
Ms. May LO	Dairy Farm Group

Mr. Enders WONG	Eurofins Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. NG Wai Kee	Fairwood
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodscan Analytics Ltd.
Mr. Allen PANG	Home of Swallows Ltd.
Mr. Allen WONG	Hong Kong Food Science and Technology Association
Ms. Becky CHEUNG	Hong Kong Food Science and Technology Association
Mr. Perry SIT	Hong Kong Health Food Association
Mr. Gray LO	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Ms. Corine LIU	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Mr. Peter JOHNSTON	Hong Kong Retail Management Association
Ms. Frenda WONG	Hong Kong Suppliers Association Ltd.
Mr. LEUNG Yiu Hung	Hong Kong Yamazaki Baking Co., Ltd.
Mr. Kelvin YAU	Institution of Dining Art
Mr. Ricky LEUNG	Institution of Dining Art
Ms. Luna LEUNG	International Life Enhance-meat & Chinese Food Therapy Assn.
Ms. MAK Yin King	International Life Enhance-meat & Chinese Food Therapy Assn.
Ms. HIKOSAKA Kumiko	JETRO Hong Kong
Mr. Frederick SHUM	Ko Wah Meat Co.
Mr. LEE Kwong Lam	Kowloon Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Alice WONG	Lee Kum Kee International Holdings Ltd.
Ms. Caroline HO	Maxim's Group
Mr. Stephen LAM	Mannings
Ms. Juliana CHAN	Maxim's Caterers Ltd.
Mr. Tommy LAM	Maxim's Caterers Ltd. (Cakes & Bakery)
Ms. Ivy YIM	McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd.
Ms. LO Wai Ming	McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Albert XU	Microfood Consulting
Ms. Florence LAW	P & G
Ms. German CHEUNG	Pappagollo Pacific Ltd.
Mr. Kit LAM	Pappagollo Pacific Ltd.
Mr. Chris CHAN	Pat Chun Int'l Ltd.
Ms. Amy FU	Pfizer Corporation Hong Kong Limited
Mr. Samuel CHAN	The Garden Co Ltd.
Mr. Douglas CHENG	The Garden Co Ltd.
Ms. Kammy YEUNG	The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Candy HON	The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre Ltd.
Mr. Eric AU	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. Attlee LAU	URC Hong Kong Co. Ltd.

Ms. Christina YIP	Vitasoy International Holdings Ltd.
Mr. Stephen CHOI	Wing Wah Manufactory Ltd.
Mr. Willem CHAN	Winner Food Products Ltd.
Mr. Philip KWAN	Wrigley Asia Pacific
Mr. NG Kam Lun	朝合肉食公司

### **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 confirmed without amendments.

### **Agenda Item 1**

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

#### **Microbiological Guidelines for Bottled Water**

3. Referring to paragraph 6 of the notes of last meeting, Dr. Ken CHONG reported that, after seeking the advice from laboratory, the testing method in use for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was ISO 16266:2006, with minor modification of using Vitek GN for bacterial confirmation. The Chairman supplemented that the microbiological criteria of bottled water included *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. The testing method followed basically that in the recent draft guidelines of Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) and the method was available from literature.

### **Addition of Permitted Antioxidant in Hong Kong**

4. Referring to paragraph 21 of the notes of last meeting, Ms. Janny MA reported that rosemary extract (International Numbering System No. 392) could be functioned as antioxidant. However, the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) had not yet assessed the safety of rosemary extract and it was not a permitted antioxidant under the Codex General Standard for Food Additives. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) was aware that the European Food Safety Authority assessed the information on the safety of rosemary extracts in 2008 and concluded they were of no safety concern. By 31 March 2011 the latest, all European Union (EU) member states should permit the use of extracts of rosemary in various specific foods with maximum permitted level established. The CFS would keep in view of the new scientific information on the safety of rosemary extract as well as the international development regarding its regulatory control.

5. In reply to enquiries from trade regarding the use of rosemary extract in food, Ms. Janny MA advised that rosemary extract was not a permitted antioxidant in Hong Kong. Regarding the use of rosemary extract as ingredient instead of antioxidant, the Chairman supplemented that trade should first ascertain the intended function of the substance when it was added to food and should be labelled accordingly for compliance with the legislation in Hong Kong. If it was added as an antioxidant, this was not permitted in Hong Kong.

### **Progress of Working Group on Nutrition Labelling**

#### **Claims on Sports Drinks**

6. Dr. Janet KWAN briefed the meeting about the situation of claims on sports drinks in light of a meeting held on 14 December 2010 with Hong Kong Suppliers Association and relevant traders. The discussion surrounded whether “source” claim on energy and carbohydrates could be accepted for sports drinks and whether sports drinks are classified as food for special dietary use or general prepackaged food. Views and information on overseas experience and local situation were exchanged in the meeting.

7. Dr. Janet KWAN advised that the meeting came up with the following conclusions:

- a) There were no conditions under the legislation for nutrient content claims in respect of “source” or “high” in energy or carbohydrates. Claims on sports drinks like “provides energy” or “contains carbohydrates” were therefore not allowed under the current legislation.
- b) To classify sports drinks as “food for special dietary use” the definition of “food for special dietary use” must be satisfied on the basis of two criteria. This was explained in the Technical Guidance Notes as follows:
  - i) specially processed or formulated to satisfy particular dietary requirements which exist because of a particular physical or physiological condition and/or specific disease and disorders and which are presented as such; and
  - ii) composition must differ significantly from the composition of ordinary foods of comparable nature.

8. Dr. Janet KWAN continued that traders might provide information on their sports drinks products to consumers by making quantitative declarations, such as “contains 8 g

carbohydrates per 100 mL”, etc., making nutrient function claims on energy and carbohydrates (as Nutrition Reference Values had been established for these two nutrients), such as “carbohydrates provide energy”, or providing other factual and not misleading information which would not imply or suggest that the product had particular nutritional properties, such as “replenish water loss”, “with electrolytes”, “for better hydration”, “refuel”, etc. On future development, the possibility of adding the claim condition for “source” or “high” in energy or carbohydrates to the legislation would be explored. Meanwhile, there was no standard set for “source” and “high” on per 100 g basis from overseas authorities, including Codex. Nevertheless, CFS would take note of latest international and Codex development on the issue. Whenever there was development on claim condition for per 100 g of food, this would be taken reference of.

9. In reply to enquiries of a trade representative, Dr. Janet KWAN advised that declaration of “food for athlete” might be classified as “food for special dietary use” when it was designed specifically for athlete and advertised in the market with this intention as well as its composition was different from other foods of comparable nature but it would eventually judge from its package and the targets of marketing for the food were for such persons.

10. The Chairman summed up that there were claims on sports drinks that were not permitted under the current legislation but there was room for quantitative declaration and nutrition function claims that are allowed might be considered to provide information to consumers for making choices.

Draft Trade Guidelines on Serving Size of Prepackaged Food for Nutrition Labelling

11. Dr. Janet KWAN briefed the meeting on the work to establish a set of guidelines to encourage and assist the trade in providing information on the serving size of prepackaged food products for the purpose of nutrition labelling (NL). At present, the current legislation on NL permitted the declarations of nutrients on the basis of “per 100 g/mL” or “per serving/package” on nutrition label. The establishment of guidelines was a response to concerns and confusions of consumers on the serving size of prepackaged food as provided on the nutrition label. The issue was discussed in the last two meetings of Working Group (WG) on NL and trade representatives were explained of the situation. The guidelines were being drafted and were introduced to the meeting of the WG on NL held on 16 December 2010. Views of trade on the draft were being collected. The Chairman advised that the current legislation did not provide any requirements on the serving size. A set of guidelines would therefore be drafted in collaboration with trade and provided to traders for reference once ready.

#### Small Volume Exemption Application

12. Mr. C. L. CHIU reported that, as at 26 November 2010, about 33,700 applications for Small Volume Exemption (SVE) were received. Among these applications, about 30,900 had been approved and about 1,700 rejected. There were 700 applications withdrawn. Applications pending processing were 385. So far, five products were found with sale volume exceeding 30,000 units. Follow up actions were being undertaken in accordance with the prescribed procedures. He appealed to trade to pay attention to the maximum sale volume of 30,000 under SVE and undertake efforts to control the sale volume.

13. In reply to enquiries of a trade representative, Mr. C. L. CHIU advised that same

prepackaged food products of the same net weight, international barcode, etc. but were packed in different shapes of packaging containers, i.e. from round to rectangular shape, etc. were regarded as different products for the purpose of applying for SVE. The requirements were stated in guidelines on SVE. To determine whether certain foods are of the same version, CFS would consider the following characteristics in relation to the foods – ingredients, packing size, flavour, manufacturer/packer’s particulars, container(material and shape), and other features. If any of the above characteristics was different, the foods were regarded as different versions. The Chairman suggested looking into the issue again and examining products in this respect to consider the way forward.

## **Agenda Item 2**

### **Study on Acrylamide in Some Popular Foods and Draft Trade Guidelines on Reducing Acrylamide in Food**

14. Ms. Janny MA briefed the meeting about the findings of the joint study with Consumer Council on acrylamide in some popular foods and the draft “Trade Guidelines on Reducing Acrylamide in Food”. She introduced the background information on acrylamide and objectives of the study (Same background information was introduced in the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Trade Consultation Forum (TCF) and recorded in paragraphs 7 to 9 of the Notes of 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TCF). Details and findings of the study were presented to the meeting

15. Ms. Janny MA pointed out that some samples, such as potato chips and biscuit snacks, were found to contain high level of acrylamide. In general, rice crackers were found to contain low level of acrylamide. The intake of acrylamide from food in local population

might be a human health concern. However, it was possible and practical to reduce the levels of acrylamide in food. In order to do so, the public should not over-heat food but should ensure the food was cooked thoroughly and should maintain a balanced diet. For trade, they should use ingredients that were low in asparagines and reducing sugars when producing products processed at high temperature and should not cook food excessively.

16. Ms. Janny MA said that in order to help trade minimising the formation of acrylamide in food, the CFS had drafted a set of Trade Guidelines on Reducing Acrylamide in Food. The guidelines were applicable to all manufacturers and caterers in particular to those producing high temperature processed potato and / or cereal based products. She advised that there were three general strategies to reduce acrylamide level in food and explained some specific ways to reduce acrylamide level in potato products. Details were available from the guidelines. However, she pointed out that there was no single solution to reduce acrylamide level in food. When attempting to do so, it was important not to compromise the chemical and microbiological safety of the food as changes in product composition and / or processing might affect the nutritional quality and the organoleptic properties and consumer acceptability. She recommended that thorough evaluation of the proposed interventions should be carried out before making any changes to avoid creating a potentially higher risk. The draft guidelines were already briefed in the 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting of TCF and were now uploaded to CFS website to consult trade until 31 December 2010. After completion of the consultation, the finalised guidelines would be uploaded to the CFS website and distributed to trade for reference.

17. In reply to enquiries of a trade representative, Ms. Janny MA understood that a few commercial laboratories in Hong Kong were able to provide testing on acrylamide. The

trade could approach to these laboratories directly. The Chairman supplemented that the laboratories might not perform the testing locally but sending the samples to their overseas partners for the testing. For the enquiry regarding the use of asparaginase as recommended in the guidelines, she suggested the trade undertaking more assessments prior to any changes to ensure product composition, nutritional quality, the organoleptic properties and consumer acceptability were not severely impaired.

18. The Chairman advised that there were international concerns on the level of acrylamide and Codex had issued Code of Practice on the reduction of acrylamide in food. The issue was being kept in view and monitored by Codex and regulation might be considered after a few years. He noticed that Europe was monitoring closely the issue and assisting traders to reduce the substance in foods. He hoped that the guidelines would assist the local trade in the same aspect. He invited comments from trade for finalising the guidelines.

### **Agenda Item 3**

#### **A Guide for Food Service and Retail Outlets – Practise Food Hygiene to Prevent Hepatitis A and Hepatitis E**

19. Dr. Ken CHONG briefed the meeting about the epidemiology and prevention of hepatitis E. The briefing covering the causes of hepatitis E, epidemiology of hepatitis E, the local situation, its source and prevention. Hepatitis E was the inflammation of liver caused by hepatitis E virus (HEV). High risk populations included pregnant women, elderly, patients with chronic liver diseases and they should pay particular attention to this disease. Currently, there were no commercially available vaccines for hepatitis E. Transmission route of HEV to human was faecal-oral via contaminated water or food, and contracting HEV

via blood transfusion and occupational exposure had been reported.

20. Dr. Ken CHONG reported that there was a rising trend of hepatitis E in Hong Kong. Bivalve shellfish and pig livers were the potential sources but previous examination of bivalve shellfish did not show that they were the major vehicle locally. The CFS collected liver samples from slaughterhouse in 2009 and found that around 30% of roaster pigs (around 4 months old), but none of porker pigs (around 6 months old), which contribute to around 2% and 98% of total admission of live pigs from the Mainland respectively, were positive for HEV. More importantly, same gene partial sequences were identified between some HEV isolates from pigs and current and past human cases. This suggested that some of the HEV isolates may have been present locally for a period of time and inadequately cooked pig livers could be one possible source for hepatitis E in Hong Kong.

21. Dr. Ken CHONG advised that to prevent HEV, the public should cook food more thoroughly to kill pathogenic viruses, especially during hotpot and congee cooking. The food can be prepared in thin slices to facilitate thorough cooking. They should boil sliced pig liver at 100°C or stir-fry in hot skillet / wok for at least three to five minutes, depending on thickness and quantity. Food should be heated to an internal temperature of 90°C for 1.5 minutes for the inactivation of HEV in molluscan shellfish. When cooking shellfishes, they should be boiled at 100°C until their shells open and continue to be boiled for additional three to five minutes afterwards. Moreover, the public should use separate chopsticks and utensils for handling raw and cooked foods during hotpot. Utensils of different colour for raw and cooked food should be provided by trade to consumers. He recommended the observation of personal hygiene measures, such as wash hands thoroughly with running water and soap for 20 seconds before handling food and often during food preparation, after

handling raw meat or offal and before eating. Travellers should maintain good personal and food hygiene and avoid drinking water and / or ice of unknown purity and eating uncooked shellfish, uncooked fruits or vegetables that were not peeled or prepared by themselves. Finally, he briefed the meeting about the content of the two tabled guides on practising food hygiene to prevent hepatitis A and hepatitis E for food service and retail outlets and for consumers respectively.

22. In reply to enquiries of a trade representative on the prediction of an outbreak of hepatitis A and the progress of recommendations in a public health report published in 1998 of vaccinating food handlers against HAV, as well as the value of vaccinating food handlers against HEV, the Chairman advised that, according to his memories, the report only predicted a possible outbreak of hepatitis A due to the decline in the immunity of Hong Kong community against HAV. It was considered worthwhile to vaccinate food handlers against HAV. There was no conclusion in the report on the value of vaccinating food handlers against HAV. However, Codex had discussed the same issue recently and it was considered not a bad idea to vaccinate food handlers against HAV, if they frequently handled food that was likely to transmit HAV, such as raw fish, shellfish, etc. For the average food handlers, this might not be applicable. It was advisable for an early detection of food handlers contracted with HAV and they should avoid handling food during the period of infection. The Department of Health would need to be consulted on the latest situation. For HEV, in light that there was no vaccination available, the option of vaccinating food handlers was not applicable.

23. The Chairman believed that the report on hepatitis A and hepatitis E would affect meat trader, shops selling congee, hotpot eating places, etc. Rising trend of hepatitis E was not

only a concern in Hong Kong, but also a concern in other parts of the world. For these reasons, prevention should be stepped up. He pointed out that the “Five Keys to Food Safety” promoted by CFS was capable of killing disease causing bacteria but they were not capable to do so for some pathogenic virus and food combinations, where higher temperature and longer cooking time were required to kill virus. Unfortunately, shellfish and pig liver were usually not properly cooked. The “Hepatitis E Virus in Fresh Pig Livers” report would be published at a press conference to be held at end of 2010. Consumers might then pay more attention to pig liver and demand such food to be properly cooked. When they cooked food in hotpot, they should then assume the responsibility of ensuring such food was properly cooked. Traders were advised to take reference to the guides to assist in the prevention..

#### **Agenda Item 4**

##### **Clonorchis and Food Safety**

24. Dr. Ken CHONG briefed the meeting about *Clonorchis sinensis* in freshwater fish. *Clonorchis sinensis* was one of the parasites which lived on or in a host as well as to derive benefit from or at the expense of its host. There were two types: protozoa – single cell and helminths – multiple cells and variations in size. *Clonorchis sinensis* was one of the flukes belonging to helminths. It was flat and about 1 to 2 cm long. People were infected with this parasite by consuming raw or undercooked freshwater fish containing metacercariae. Over 100 species of freshwater fish, mainly carp, such as grass carp, big head carp, etc. can be infected with the parasite. The parasite might also infect other mammals, such as cats, dogs, pigs through feeding with dead freshwater fish. Faecal contamination of environment and water bodies, e.g. faeces were used as fertilizer and toilets were built over fishponds,

could lead to the dispersion of eggs.

25. Dr. Ken CHONG continued that *Clonorchis sinensis* was recently classified as “carcinogenic to humans” (Group 1). Light infections might cause mild or no symptoms while infection of large numbers would cause intense infection for long duration and result in loss of appetite, diarrhoea and fever. Infection could also cause obstruction of the bile duct and liver cirrhosis. In severe cases, they could result in chronic jaundice and eventually the higher occurrence of cholangiocarcinoma – cancer arising from bile duct cells. The parasite was endemic in Mainland China, Taiwan, Korea and some other countries and areas in Southeast Asia. Locally, it was roughly estimated that 80% of local human cases of enteric parasites were caused by *Clonorchis sinensis*.

26. Dr. Ken CHONG advised that the public should not eat raw or undercooked freshwater fish. They should note that “Chinese Yu Sang”, i.e. freshwater fish intended for raw consumption, was prohibited for sale in Hong Kong. The public should also avoid such dish while travelling. Freshwater fish may be undercooked in some cases, such as during hotpot and congee cooking, or when the fish slices are too thick. The public should pay particular attention to such risks. They should note that wine, vinegar, wasabi, mustard and spices were not able to destroy parasites including the fluke. In light that “Chinese Yu Sang” was prohibited in Hong Kong, trade should not supply “Chinese Yu Sang” to consumers. Penalties for offenders were up to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for 6 months. They should use separate utensils to handle raw food and ready-to-eat food, cut raw freshwater fish into thin slices to facilitate thorough cooking during hotpot and congee cooking. For fish farmers, they should adopt Good Aquaculture Practice and should not use waterway that was contaminated by domestic or livestock

sewage. More information could be found from the website of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. Trade should apply the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system to control the risk of contamination of fish culture by parasites.

27. The Chairman supplemented that trade should not sell “Chinese Yu Sang”; otherwise they were selling cancer-causing food to consumers. The safe cooking measure under “Five Keys to Food Safety” should be able to kill parasites.

### **Agenda Item 5**

#### **Any Other Business**

#### **Bisphenol A in Baby Bottles Banned in Europe**

28. Ms. Melva CHEN informed the meeting that a decision to prohibit Bisphenol A (BPA) baby bottle was made by European Commission (EC) in November 2010. EC planned to prohibit manufacturers in EU from the production of Bisphenol A baby bottle starting March 2011. In June 2011, the prohibition would be extended to import and sale of such baby bottle. This measure not only affected directly the trade of baby appliance, it also arouse the attention of the public and food trade. She advised that apart from being used in the manufacture of polycarbonate plastic milk bottle, BPA was also used to line the inside of food and beverage cans. The concerns of BPA residues in foods were related to its hormonal properties. Some studies of small amount of BPA in animals found that there was the possibility of adverse health effects on reproduction, the nervous system and behavioural development but the impact on human was not conclusive. The current daily intake limit of 0.05 mg per kg of body weight set by the European Food Safety Authority was found acceptable with the human, including newborns and infants, metabolism. Hence, it was

considered not necessary to revise this limit.

29. Ms. Melva CHEN continued that the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held a special meeting in November 2010. Based on the current knowledge of BPA, experts found it difficult to determine the relation between small amount of BPA and human health and considered it premature to introduce public health measures at that stage. At present, countries like United States of America, Australia, Japan, etc. did not prohibit the use of BPA as linings in food and beverage cans yet they did encourage the use of suitable substitutes. In Hong Kong, there was no legislation to regulate the use of food contact materials but Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, Cap. 132, required all food for sale in Hong Kong must be fit for human consumption. For this reason, the sale of food provided in package that was not suitable for human use and the food was then rendered unfit for human consumption would be an offence. Trade might refer to the limit for transfer of BPA at 0.6 mg per kg of food set by the Mainland and EC as reference. CFS would monitor closely the development of international assessment of BPA and regulation and follow up the issue.

30. The Chairman supplemented that CFS had taken reference of the assessment with WHO and the FAO and was expecting more information from studies. In view that other countries had undertaken corresponding measures and recommended the use of alternate materials, he suggested trade keeping in view development of the issue.

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

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

32. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.