

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Notes of Third Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum held on
14 December 2006 at 2:30 pm at Conference Hall, 3/F, 3 Edinburgh Place, Central, Hong
Kong

PRESENT

Government Representatives

Dr. Y Y HO	Con(CM)(RAC)	(Chairman)
Dr. Samuel YEUNG	PMO(RAC)	
Dr. Y H CHONG	Head(RCS)	
Dr. Terence CHEUNG	SMO(RA)	
Mr. Johnny CHU	ScO(RA)1	
Mr. K T TAM	Supt(I/E)1	
Mr. K K LI	CHI(FL)	
Mr. S S LEUNG	Supt(RC)	(Notes-taker)

Trade Representatives

Mr. Ronald LAU	Hong Kong Food Council
Mr. Leslie WONG	Hong Kong Food Council
Ms. Catrina CHAN	Hong Kong Federation of Restaurant & Related Trades
Mr. Patrick NG	Hong Kong Food Science and Technology Association
Mr. Brain LEUNG	Hong Kong Food Science and Technology Association
Mr. Jason Y.K LEUNG	Hong Kong Suppliers Association
Mr. Albert YAN	Hong Kong Suppliers Association
Mr. Albert TANG	Hong Kong Suppliers Association
Ms. Frenda WONG	Hong Kong Suppliers Association
Ms. Ruth YU	Hong Kong Retail Management Association
Mr. Stephen CHOI	The Chinese Manufactures' Association
Ms. Mona WONG	The Chinese Manufactures' Association
Mr. Ivan CHAN	Vitasoy International Holding Ltd.
Mr. Allen HO	The Dairy Farm Co. Ltd.
Ms. CHEUNG Hiu-ming	A.S.Watson Group
Mr. Ben TSE	Aeon Stores (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd.
Mr. Edward CHAK	Aeon Stores (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd.
Ms. Edith KAM	Aeon Stores (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd.

Mr. Ricky PANG	Aeon Stores (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd.
Ms. Joanna YIP	Master Kong (Hong Kong) Trading Co. Ltd (Tingyi)
Ms. Elearnor CHAN	Nestle Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. Yvonne CHAN	The Royal Pacific Hotel & Towers
Mr. Leslie TSE	Regal Riverside Hotel
Ms. Anne CHOW	Maxim's Catering Ltd.
Ms. Maria LI	Maxim's Catering Ltd.
Mr. SIT Chi-yeung, Charles	Maxim's Food Production Centre
Mr. Leo C O YUEN	Data Insight Group
Ms. LAU Kau, Suki	Friend Kong Limited
Ms. CHENG Wai-yan	Hong Kong Gourmet Ltd.
Ms. Sandy WONG	Hong Kong Gourmet Ltd.
Mr. James HO	The Asia Provisions Co Ltd.
Mr. Conrad LAM	Four Seas Mercantile Limited
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.
Mr. LAU Kin-wah	HK Kowloon Chamber of Commerce
Mr. LEE To-pui	China Resources Vanguard (HK) Co Ltd.
Mr. CHOI Wai-lun	Winner Food Products Ltd.
Mr. YU Po-choi	Guangnan Fresh And Live Foodstuffs Ltd.
Mr. Johnny CHAN	Kee Wah Food Production Ltd.
Ms. Kay NG	Kee Wah Food Production Ltd.

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and introduced staff of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) attending the forum.

Agenda Item 1

Confirmation of the notes of last meeting

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

Agenda Item 2

Matters arising from the notes of last meeting

3. There being no matters arising from the notes of last meeting, the meeting proceeded to Agenda Item 3.

Agenda Item 3

Amendment to Preservatives in Food Regulations

4. Dr. Terence CHEUNG briefed members on the proposed amendments to Preservatives in Food Regulations. The consultation started on that day (14 December 2006) and members

were invited to express their views by 28 February 2007. During the consultation period, there would be two public consultation forums, one on 23 January 2007 at the Science Museum and the other on 7 February 2007 at the Hong Kong Central Library.

5. The Chairman added the main purpose of the upcoming public consultations was to tape the views of the public on the approach of the proposed amendments. Technical details of amendments would be followed-up later by technical meetings with the trade. All were welcome to participate in the public consultation forums in the coming year.
6. One trade representative enquired about the differences between the Codex and the current local standards on preservatives. Mr. Johnny CHU replied that under the current Preservatives in Food Regulations, only 12 preservatives were permitted while the Codex standard permitted 11 additional preservatives and antioxidants. These additives had been evaluated by the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) and found acceptable for use in foods.
7. One trade representative concerned about the types of food which would be affected most after the amendment. Mr. Johnny CHU informed the trade that one of the preservatives, namely sulphur dioxide in some food commodities such as dried fruits would be affected most according to the proposed amendments. The Chairman added that more details would be given in the coming public consultation forums and on the CFS website once available.
8. One trade representative expressed concern how CFS would cope with the inconsistency between the Codex standard and the existing regulations. The Chairman responded that in situation where there were local standards for specific preservatives and antioxidants in specific food items but there were no corresponding Codex standards, it was proposed that the existing standards would be kept. The proposed amendment, an amalgamation of the standards in the General Standard in Food Additives(GSFA) with those of the existing Regulations, would allow the trade to use a much wider choice of preservatives and antioxidants. If there were discrepancies of permitted levels between the GSFA and the Regulations, the ones listed in the GSFA would be adopted for the sake of international harmonisation unless there were strong technological justifications to keep the local standards.
9. Mr. Johnny CHU further informed the trade that some permitted additives under the GSFA were multi-functional, serving both as antioxidant and preservative. On the contrary, preservatives and antioxidants were mutually exclusive under the regulations. After the amendment on the regulations, the trade would have more flexibility in using the multi-functional additives. The Chairman reminded the trade that the grace period of the

Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations would lapse on 9 July 2007. The trade had to comply strictly with the current regulations.

10. Mr. Johnny CHU continued to introduce the new food category system of the amendment to Preservatives in Food Regulations to the trade. The amendment reflected the international trend of moving away from so-called “product-specific” legislation to horizontal provisions aimed at all food types. He remarked that the new system was easier to understand and would increase clarity in the use of preservatives and antioxidants. The food category system was hierarchical, meaning that when the use of an additive was permitted in a general category, it was automatically permitted in all its sub-categories, unless otherwise stated. Similarly, when an additive was permitted in a sub-category, its use was also allowed in any further sub-categories and individual foodstuffs mentioned in a sub-category.
11. One trade representative enquired whether the food category system in the proposed regulations would include all food products in Hong Kong. The Chairman responded that as certain food items in the regulations were unique to the local food setting and might not fit the relevant Codex food category system, new food groups would need to be created to accommodate those food items. He encouraged the trade to give additional comments on the proposed amendment in the coming public consultation forums.

Agenda Item 4

Control of Import and Sale of Eggs

12. Dr. Samuel YEUNG introduced the recent food incident, Sudan dyes found in eggs, in Hong Kong. He informed the meeting the actions taken by the CFS, including the liaison and communication work with relevant stakeholders during the incidents.
13. Mr K T TAM informed the meeting that the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) and CFS had reached the consensus on the control of exported poultry eggs to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) on 28 November 2006. AQSIQ agreed to implement a series of control measures to tighten the eggs control from the food source shortly. These would include the implementation of the export enterprises and poultry egg farm registration system, carrying out inspections and testings for Sudan dyes in eggs exported to HKSAR by each relevant Entry Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau (CIQ), putting relevant information on export egg consignments, issuing a health certificate for each consignment of egg exported to HKSAR as from January 2007 and strengthening enforcement against illegal acts. He also introduced measures that would be carried out by the CFS including a voluntary enrolment scheme for poultry egg importers. Details of the scheme would be announced in the press release later. Further meeting would

also be arranged with importers concerned on introduction of the scheme.

14. One trade representative enquired the hazard levels of Sudan dyes. Dr. Samuel YEUNG replied that the main concern about Sudan dyes was their potential to cause cancer. However, the level of Sudan dyes found in the affected products posed a low risk for human upon normal consumption. He added that the Sudan dyes also caused large scale recall of a number of food products in Europe due to the finding of Sudan dyes in chilli products previously.

Another trade representative queried whether the wholesaler would be prosecuted in this “Sudan dyes found in eggs” case. Mr. K K LI replied that as stated in the Hong Kong Food Law (Cap 132), no food intended for sale for human consumption shall contain any added colouring matter which is not a permitted colouring matter. Therefore retailers selling eggs containing Sudan dyes would be prosecuted unless they could provide supportive documents e.g. invoices to plead warranty. The trade representative further enquired about any exemptions from prosecution in food incidents. The Chairman responded that the responsibility for contravening the regulations might be passed to the importer if the wholesaler provided sufficient information for the authority to trace the food source. Mr. K K LI advised that whenever there was a food incident, the most important action of the CFS was to protect public health by ensuring that the affected products were no longer placed in the market and to trace the source of supply for further follow-up action at source. Whether to take out prosecution against the vendor or not would be subjected to a host of factors. The Chairman added that Government, food trade and the consumer should work in collaboration to ensure food safety. Prosecution was just one of the measures to ensure food safety.

15. Some trade representatives enquired whether the new policy for the imported eggs only applied to those coming from China. The Chairman replied that the latest policy established by the AQSIQ and the new administrative arrangements by the CFS would only apply to eggs imported from China. However, once the legislative work on the imported eggs was completed, all imported eggs would be unequivocally under control.

Agenda Item 5

Report current risk communication activities

17. Mr. S. S. LEUNG reported on the new initiatives and the current risk communication activities in the pipeline including the Trade Consultation Forum, Food Safety Focus, Food Safety Electronic Information Delivery System and the forthcoming International Symposium on Food Safety to be held on 12-13 January 2007. He also invited the trade to fill in the questionnaire they received and to give their comments about the forum.

Agenda Item 6

Any other business

18. The Chairman informed the meeting that CFS had conducted several surveys on different foods and the one on Chinese New Year festive foods would be conducted shortly. Results would be disseminated to the public.

19. Some trade representatives enquired about CFS's view on trans-fat issue. Dr. Terence CHEUNG said the CFS had monitored the development on this issue closely. However, the government had no intention for any legislative control for the time being. The Chairman added the labelling scheme on nutrition information would be submitted to the Legislative Council in the coming year. Phase II of the labelling scheme would include labelling total fat and saturated fat content on the food label. It was not compulsory to list the trans-fat content on the label unless there was a claim in connection with fat content. CFS would keep in view of the international development and review the regulations as appropriate.

20. One trade representative enquired the communication mechanism between the CFS and the Mainland authority. Mr. K T TAM replied that the CFS had regular and ad-hoc meetings with AQSIQ to discuss food safety issues of common interest. The Chairman added that during food incidents, the CFS had to work closely with the trade to tackle the issue together.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.