

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Notes of the Twenty-fourth Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum
held on 23 June 2010 at 2:30 p.m.
in Conference Room at Room 102, 1/F, 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)	
Ms. L. P. ZHANG	Food Safety Officer (Risk Assessment)2	
Mr. Y. K. LAI	Superintendent (Food Surveillance)2	
Ms. Melissa LIU	Scientific Officer (Nutrition Labelling)	
Ms. Melva CHEN	Scientific Officer (Chemical)	
Mr. Y. K. CHAN	Chief Health Inspector (Import/Export)1	
Mr. C. L. CHIU	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling)	
Ms. S. W. CHUNG	Superintendent (Risk Communication)	(Secretary)

Trade Representatives

Mr. Peter Johnston	A.S. Watson Group (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Brian CHEUNG	A.S. Watson Industries
Mr. FUNG Kwok Keung	A.S. Watson Industries
Ms. Vanessa HO	Abbot Nutrition
Mr. Andrew WONG	Abbot Nutrition
Ms. Tina CHAN	Abbot Nutrition
Mr. WOO Lun	Association of Restaurant Managers
Ms. LAM Wing Sze	Association of Restaurant Managers
Mrs. Becky CHEUNG	Best Key Consultants
Ms. Ming CHEUNG	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Ms. Grace YEE	City Super
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.
Ms. Quinny CHAN	Eurofins H.K. Ltd.

Ms. Gillian LAM	Food and Health Bureau
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodsan Analytics Ltd.
Ms. Jeannie LOK	Four Seas Mercantile Ltd.
Ms. Kinki CHENG	Four Seas Mercantile Ltd.
Ms. Jackie LIU	GlaxoSmithKline Ltd.
Mr. Ivan NG	Godiva Chocolatier
Mr. Perry SIT	HK Health Food Association
Mr. Jacob CHAN	Hong Kong Chinese Medicine Merchants Association
Mr. Joshua SUEN	Hong Kong Suppliers Association Ltd.
Mr. Bill CHAN	Institution of Dining Art
Ms. Cindy WONG	Invest HK
Mr. WONG Wai Chun	Kiu Fung Hong Ltd.
Mr. LUNG Ka Fai	Kiu Fung Hong Ltd.
Ms. Michelle KWAN	Mannings
Ms. Fenny LAM	Marks & Spencer (AP) Ltd.
Mr. Elvis NG	Marks & Spencer (AP) Ltd.
Ms. Gloria LIU	Maxim's Caterers Ltd.
Ms. Joyce WONG	McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd.
Ms. LO Wai Ming	McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Jonathan CHOW	Nikken's Japanese Food Co., Ltd.
Mr. HUI Yiu Kai	Nissin Foods Co., Ltd.
Ms. German CHEUNG	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Mr. Kit LAM	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Ms. Cactus LAI	ParknShop
Mr. Chris CHAN	Pat Chun Int'l Ltd.
Ms. Jenny CHAN	Pfizer Corporation Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. WONG Sin Ming	Po Sau Tong Ginseng & Antler Association HK Ltd.
Ms. Nicole CHAN	SGS Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. Felix KO	Stevia International Ltd.
Mr. Derek KO	Stevia International Ltd.
Mr. James HO	The Asia Provisions Co., Ltd.
Ms. Brenda NG	The Wing On Dept. Store (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Eric AU	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. Ivan CHAN	Vitasoy International Holdings Ltd.
Ms. May LO	Wellcome Fresh Food Centre
Ms. Amelia YEUNG	YHS HK (2000)PTE LTD

Opening Remarks

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

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

Nutrition Information on Products for Sale at Vending Machine

3. It was advised by trade representatives that consumers might call the telephone number provided on the vending machine selling soft drinks to make enquiries on nutrition information of products for sale at these machines.

Progress of Working Group on Nutrition Labelling

Progress of Applications for Small Volume Exemption

4. Mr. C. L. CHIU reported that, as at 18 June 2010, about 25,800 applications for Small Volume Exemption (SVE) were received. Among these applications, about 22,000 had been approved and about 1,600 rejected. There were 3,781 applications withdrawn.

Computer System Support for SVE

5. Mr. C. L. CHIU advised that Centre for Food Safety (CFS) was installing a computer system to facilitate traders submitting applications and related materials, as well as reporting data on the sales volume under the SVE Scheme through internet. The computer system was being modified by the contractor. It was anticipated that the modification would be completed in early July 2010. Traders would be invited to attend an interactive workshop to be held in early July 2010 to learn more details and the operation of the system.

Processing SVE Application in Food Fair

6. Mr. C. L. CHIU advised that CFS had discussed the arrangement with Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) for Food Expo in August 2010. Food Expo normally lasted four to five days. Applications for SVE involving food products for sales at this event should be processed quickly or else it would serve no useful purpose for such applications. It was agreed that a fast lane would be set up by CFS to process applications under SVE for food products for sale at the Food Expo. Pamphlets and application forms on SVE had been provided to HKTDC for distribution to traders participating at Food Expo. He appealed to trade representatives to highlight the event in their applications for SVE involving food products for sale at Food Expo to ensure these applications would be accorded the highest priority in processing.

Food for Special Dietary Use

7. Ms. Melissa LIU briefed the meeting on food for special dietary use. The issue was discussed at the 5th meeting of Working Group (WG) on Nutrition Labelling (NL) held on 31

March 2010. The NL Scheme was not applicable to food for special dietary uses which were formulated due to special nutritional requirements of the target subgroups. However, there was no definition for “Food for special dietary use” in Cap 132W. Nevertheless, there were principles to refer to when defining such food and these were mentioned in Question 1 of Annex IV to the Technical Guidance Notes (TGN), which were similar to those defined by Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex), and they were as follows:

- a) Food for special dietary use was those specially processed or formulated to satisfy particular dietary requirements which existed because of a particular physical or physiological condition and / or specific disease and disorders and which were presented as such; and
- b) The composition of these food stuffs must differ significantly from the composition of ordinary foods of comparable nature, if such ordinary foods existed.

8. Ms. Melissa LIU pointed out that there were specific requirements on NL for foods for special dietary uses in the Codex guidelines. For example, the NL should include energy content in kcal and kJ, protein, available carbohydrate and fat in gram, and total quantity of those specific nutrients or other components which provide the characterizing essential feature for the special dietary use. The information should be expressed as per 100g/mL and where appropriate per serving of food as sold.

9. Ms. Melissa LIU said that different overseas countries adopted different categorization and requirements for food for special dietary use. Examples of food that could be defined as foods for special dietary use in individual countries included food for medical purposes, formula for pregnant / lactating women, etc. There were often special compositional and /

or labelling, including NL, requirements, set out for such foods. Principles for categorizing food for special dietary use and examples had been provided to trade in Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and trade workshops. For example, formula for pregnant / lactating women might be categorized as food for special dietary use, but protein powder for the general population and sugar-free throat soothing pastilles were generally not considered as food for special dietary use.

10. Ms. Melissa LIU continued that, without contravening the principles as mentioned in the TGN, the following products were generally considered as food for special dietary use:

- a) Products that must always be used under medical supervision and was presented as such;
- b) Products solely for tube feeding; and
- c) Products that were specially formulated for certain patients / physical conditions and was clearly presented as such, e.g. with the statement “specially formulated for diabetic patients”. However, products only marked with "suitable for xx patients" might not fall into this category.

However, these products should not provide any information or advertisement suggesting or implying that the product was also recommended or suitable for the general population or other population subgroups which did not suffer from that specified disease / condition. Other products might also be considered as food for special dietary use as long as the principles mentioned in the TGN were satisfied.

11. Ms. Melissa LIU illustrated to the meeting examples of “Food for special dietary use” with the following five cases:

- a) A formulated supplementary food product for post-operation patients (Case 1) – If marked with “food for special medical purposes” on package, it was generally considered as food for special dietary use. Product with the statement/ advertisement that it was suitable / recommended for general population, e.g. “for health-conscious people”, “for maintaining well-being and help you stay energetic”, “for picky-eaters”, etc. was not food for special dietary use.
- b) Food for kidney disease patient (Case 2) – If marked with “Specially formulated for renal failure patient” or similar meaning, it was generally considered as food for special dietary use. If marked with “suitable for patients with kidney disease”, it might or might not be considered as food for special dietary use. If presented as “suitable for individuals who concern about kidney health”, it might not be considered as food for special dietary use.
- c) A formula food with the statement “under medical supervision” (Case 3) – If it clearly indicated that the product must always be used under medical supervision, it was generally considered as food for special dietary use. If it should be used under medical supervision only under some circumstances, e.g. “for children under age of 3, use under medical supervision only” or “use under medical supervision if use as sole source of nutrition”, it might or might not be considered as food for special dietary use.
- d) Formula food suitable for tube feeding (Case 4) – If it was specially formulated for tube feeding and not intended for oral use, it was generally considered as food for special dietary use. If it was suitable for both tube feeding and oral use, it might or might not be considered as food for special dietary use.
- e) Milk powder for elderly (Case 5) – If targeted to the elderly population only as marketing strategy, but the composition was not significantly different from

ordinary food, e.g. similar to common high-calcium milk powder, it was not food for special dietary use. For products with added nutrients which were of interest to the elderly consumers (e.g. fatty acids, amino acids, vitamins, minerals), if these target consumers actually did not have special requirement on these nutrients as compared to the general adult population, the products were not food for special dietary use.

12. Ms. Melissa LIU remarked that the five cases were for general reference only. For products considered as “Food for special dietary use” in these cases, it was based on the assumption that they had also satisfied the two principles as mentioned in the TGN. In case of doubts on whether individual products were “Food for special dietary use”, they would be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Codex and many overseas countries set out separate requirements for “Food for special dietary use”, which were more stringent than regular food products. She recommended taking reference of international guidelines when providing information on energy and nutrient contents on the labels for reference of consumers and health professionals.

13. Ms. Melissa LIU pointed out that, unless the principles mentioned in the TGN had been satisfied, sports drinks or similar products, were generally considered as general prepackaged food products. For general prepackaged foods, requirements on nutrition claims in the Amendment Regulation should be noted. “Source” claim on energy and carbohydrates such as “provides energy” and “provides carbohydrates” were not allowed under the Amendment Regulation. Traders who produced or sold such products should take particular note on these restrictions.

14. There was reservation with a trade representative on the restrictions of nutrient claims

for sports drinks as such drinks were intended to provide energy and carbohydrates to consumers, especially athletes. If nutrient claims could not be provided on these drinks, it would cause difficulties to inform consumers of the characteristics of such products. Ms. Melissa LIU replied that sports drinks should first be examined by their nature and product information to see whether they fell under the relevant definition and could be categorized as “Food for special dietary use”. If such products were found falling in the category of “Food for special dietary use”, they were not covered by the regulation of the NL Scheme; on the other hand, if they were found not falling in the category of “Food for Special dietary use”, the NL requirements for general prepackaged food products would apply. Under the current legislation of NL requirements, certain claims on energy and carbohydrates such as “provides energy” and “provides carbohydrates” were not allowed. Traders might consider providing quantitative declaration for sports drinks, if they did not fall under “Food for special dietary use” category. That said, statements mentioning the exact quantity of energy or carbohydrates per bottle or per 100 mL were acceptable.

15. The Chairman remarked that, although “Food for special dietary use” was not covered by the NL Scheme, traders should, as far as possible, provide nutrition information on products of such category as reference to consumers to meet their expectations. He also reminded that sports drinks were only general food products. The regulation was the same as other general food products. There were claims that could not be declared on these drinks.

Energy Conversion Factor for Polyols

16. Ms. Melissa LIU briefed the meeting on energy conversion factor for Polyols. The issue was discussed at the 7th meeting of WG on NL held on 20 May 2010 due to the receipt

of several enquiries from trade on the matter. She advised that polyols or “sugar alcohols” were chemical derivatives of sugars. Examples were mannitol, xylitol, sorbitol, erythritol, isomalt, etc. According to the Amendment Regulation, energy was calculated according to Guidelines on NL adopted by Codex. However, no specific energy conversion factor had been established by Codex for polyols. Nevertheless, Codex had adopted the energy conversion factor of 4 kcal/g (17kJ/g) for carbohydrates.

17. Ms. Melissa LIU pointed out that, according to Question 22 in Annex I to Method Guidance Notes (MGN), “in general, sugar alcohol is classified as carbohydrate constituent”. Question 9 in the same Annex also stated that “since the content of sugar alcohols in prepackaged food would be included in the available carbohydrates content if it is calculated by the difference, the energy conversion factor for carbohydrates would also be applied to sugar alcohols”. During enforcement, tolerance limits would be applied for declaration of energy level and nutrient content on NL. For energy, it would be acceptable if the actual level in product is no more than 120% of value declared on NL.

18. Ms. Melissa LIU added that it was observed from the market that some products might not have used “4kcal/g” or “17kJ/g” as conversion factor for polyols as currently set out in the MGN. Using different conversion factors would affect compliance on energy value of products using polyols as one of the main ingredients, especially when energy was mainly contributed by polyols. Examples of products that might be affected most were sugar free/low sugar chewing gum, candies, beverages, etc. It was foreseeable that the trade might encounter problem on the application of energy conversion factor for polyols. In this connection, the situation had been reviewed.

19. Ms. Melissa LIU continued that there was no specific conversion factor established by

Codex for polyols. According to a document of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), it recommended 10 kJ/g (2.4 kcal/g) as a general energy conversion factor for polyols, which reflected the directive of European Commission in 1990. However, it was considered more desirable to use a more specific factor if polyol was a substantial source of energy in product. No specific conversion factor had been established for polyols in Mainland, whereas overseas jurisdictions had adopted or recommended different factors.

20. Ms. Melissa LIU advised that, apart from using the factor 4kcal/g (17kJ/g), to allow more flexibility, it was also acceptable for the use of other energy conversion factors for polyols, which were accepted by recognized international/national food/health authorities. In case of doubt during enforcement, traders would be requested to provide relevant details such as product ingredients and their amounts and conversion factors adopted for consideration of appropriate actions. The relevant FAQ, namely Question 4.3.7, had been uploaded to CFS website for reference of the trade.

21. The Chairman summed up that a flexible approach would be adopted in enforcing the compliance on declaration of energy value concerning conversion factor of polyols in view that there was no international uniform energy conversion factor established for these chemical derivatives of sugars.

Proposed Amendment Regulation on Sweeteners

22. A trade representative enquired about the progress of permitting two more sweeteners in Hong Kong. Referring to paragraph 20 of the notes of last meeting, the Chairman advised that the amendments of adding neotame and steviol glycosides as permitted sweeteners had been gazetted. The proposed amendments were submitted on 26 May 2010 to Legislative

Council (LegCo) for consideration. Subject to no objection from LegCo in the meantime, the two sweeteners would be permitted in food for sale in Hong Kong starting 1 August 2010.

Agenda Item 2

Preservatives in Food (Amendment) Regulations

23. Ms. L. P. ZHANG briefed the meeting that the main purpose of the presentation was to remind trade representatives the end of the transitional period of Preservatives in Food (Amendment) Regulation 2008 (Amended Regulation) on 30 June 2010. With effect from 1 July 2010, all foods must comply with the Amended Regulation. The presentation covered the contents of the amendments and the updated information. In the Amended Regulation, there were the following changes with reference to Codex standards or the Codex General Standard on Food Additives:

- a) Amendment of the definitions of preservatives and antioxidants;
- b) Introduction of Food Category System;
- c) Merging the lists of permitted preservatives and antioxidants of the former regulation; and
- d) Changing the number and the maximum permissible levels of permitted preservatives or antioxidants, either remaining unchanged, relaxed or tightened.

24. Ms. L. P. ZHANG advised that a total of 29 preservatives / antioxidants were now permitted for use in food. There were more choices to the food trade with 11 additional preservatives and antioxidants permitted for food use in the amendments (For the list of

additional preservatives and antioxidants, paragraph 29 of the notes of 23rd meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum (TCF) might be referred). She pointed out that there was one preservative, namely Propyl para-hydroxybenzoate (International Numbering System 216) and its Alternative Form, prohibited after the amendments. Although the preservatives might have been used in many food categories such as sauces like curry paste, fish sauce, pickled food like pickled olive, juice like grape juice, there were many alternatives, such as benzoic acid, sulphur dioxide, etc. to choose as replacement.

25. Ms. L. P. ZHANG added that the message was already conveyed to trade representatives at the 23rd meeting of TCF held on 16 April 2010. There was a press release on 30 May 2010 to inform the public and a letter was issued on 15 June 2010 to remind the trade. Traders might find full information on the matter at CFS website from this link: http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew_fstr/whatsnew_fstr_consult_paper.html.

26. The Chairman reminded the meeting that after the end of the transitional period, one preservative would be prohibited whereas the levels of some preservatives were tightened. In reply to enquiry of a trade representative, the Chairman advised that the transitional period of the Amended Regulation had started almost two years ago and guidelines had been issued to inform the trade of the Amended Regulation. These were available at CFS website.

Agenda Item 3

Risk Assessment Study – Nitrate and Nitrite in Vegetables Available in Hong Kong

27. Ms. Melva CHEN briefed the meeting on the risk assessment (RA) study conducted for nitrate and nitrite in vegetables available for sale in Hong Kong. Consuming two servings of fruits and three servings of vegetables were promoted by Department of Health for a

balanced diet and good health. Although vegetables were good to health, it was worth to note that nitrite could be produced by bacteria from nitrate naturally present in vegetables due to improper handling and storage. In 2008, when an 8-month-old baby suffered from methaemoglobinaemia (Blue Baby Syndrome) after consuming congee with Chinese spinach that contain high level of nitrite. Methaemoglobinaemia was caused by shortage of oxygen in human body. In this connection, the objectives of the RA study were as follows:

- a) To determine the nitrate and nitrite levels of vegetables available in Hong Kong;
- b) To explore preparation and cooking methods for reducing the nitrate; and
- c) To assess health risk of local people associated with nitrate and nitrite intakes from vegetables.

28. Ms. Melva CHEN advised that nitrate and nitrite occurred naturally in the environment. They were produced endogenously in animals and humans. Nitrate and nitrite were frequently used as fertilisers and food additives in prescribed foods. Factors affecting levels of nitrate and nitrite include species variations, growing conditions, storage conditions and cooking methods. There was a worldwide problem of nitrate and nitrite in vegetables due to the excessive use of fertilisers containing nitrogen. There were cases of high nitrate levels, i.e. over 5,000 mg/kg, found in certain leafy vegetables in Europe and Mainland China. Nitrate was non-toxic by itself, but nitrite would cause methaemoglobinaemia and nitroso compounds would cause cancer. When nitrite interacted with hemoglobin and affected its oxygen affinity, methaemoglobinaemia would be resulted. As the digestive system of infants was not grown maturely, they would be more susceptible to nitrite-induced methaemoglobinaemia. Although nitrate and nitrite were not carcinogenic to humans, the compound of nitrosamines created in stomach was carcinogenic. Nevertheless, Vitamin C / Antioxidants in vegetables were able to inhibit the formation of nitrosamines.

29. Ms. Melva CHEN continued that the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) had set out that the Acceptable Daily Intake (ADI) was 0 to 3.7 mg/kg body weight (bw) whereas it was 0 to 0.07 mg/kg bw for nitrite. In view of well-known benefits of vegetables and the lack of data on the possible effects of vegetables matrices on the bio-availability of nitrate, JECFA was of the view that “it is inappropriate to compare exposure to nitrate from vegetables directly with the ADI and hence to derive limits for nitrate in vegetables directly from it”. On the regulatory measures, nitrate and nitrite as food additives could be used as preservatives in specific food items, such as cheese and cured meat products. However, there is no Codex and local standard on nitrate and nitrite as food contaminants in vegetables.

30. Ms. Melva CHEN reported that, in the RA study, 73 types of commonly consumed vegetables were collected in two seasons of winter and summer. There were five individual samples for each type of vegetables and season. These samples came from wet markets and supermarkets in Hong Kong. Laboratory analysis was carried out by Food Research Laboratory. Consumption data were drawn from Hong Kong Population-Based Food Consumption Survey 2005-2007. The results of the study discovered that the nitrate levels of vegetables were in descending order from leafy vegetables to root and tuber vegetables, and from tuber vegetables to fruiting and legume vegetables. Over 80% of vegetables in the study contained nitrate levels below 2,000 mg/kg but nitrate levels in Chinese spinach, Shanghai cabbage, and petiole Chinese cabbage were found relatively high, exceeding 3,500 mg/kg. Overall speaking, the nitrite levels were found generally low with mean concentration of below 1 mg/kg. The results were generally in line with those found in Mainland and other countries.

31. Ms. Melva CHEN pointed out that, according to the RA study, nitrate in vegetables could not be reduced effectively by soaking but cooking them in water evenly for one to three minutes could reduce nitrate significantly. She advised that RA study concluded that the levels of nitrate and nitrite found in vegetables in this study were unlikely to pose any immediate health risk to the general population. However, young infants were more susceptible to nitrite-induced methaemoglobinaemia. Although the syndrome rarely happened, it could not rule out the occurrence of methaemoglobinaemia in this group resulting from consuming vegetables that were high in nitrate and improperly handled. Measures had to be taken to reduce the nitrate exposure while maintaining the recommended intake of vegetables.

32. Ms. Melva CHEN advised that farmers should observe good agriculture practice (GAP). The trade should obtain vegetables from reliable sources and maintain proper records to enable source tracing when required. Besides, the trade should store vegetables in either refrigerator or cool and dry places to avoid excessive formation of nitrite due to spoilage. For the general public, it was recommended that they should maintain a balanced diet with at least two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables every day. Although certain leafy vegetables were relatively high in nitrate, they were also rich in many essential nutrients. Leafy vegetables should be maintained but should not be the only type of vegetables in the diet. A variety of low nitrate containing vegetables such as fruiting and legumes vegetables should be available. In addition, the public should handle and cook vegetables properly as follows:

- a) Cook vegetables soon after cutting or mashing;
- b) Keep vegetables under refrigeration if they are not being cooked immediately;
- c) Wash and peel vegetables before cooking; and

- d) Cook high-nitrate vegetables in water and discard the cooking water before consumption.

Infants below 6 months of age should not be fed with vegetables whereas those over 6 months of age should be fed with vegetables immediately after cooking or they should be kept frozen when consumption was delayed to avoid accumulation of nitrite due to contamination of the food as precautionary measure.

33. A trade representative sought advice on whether it would require terminating the sales of any vegetables when the RA study was announced to the public. He expected that there were two questions from the media: whether any vegetables could be bought from retail outlets operated by his company and whether it was necessary to terminate the sales of any types of vegetables. He said that the advice of Government would be followed but, judging from the content of the RA study, he did not anticipate the need of terminating the sales of any types of vegetables. The Chairman advised that there were only regulatory levels set for spinach and lettuce in Europe but not other parts of the world. There were no such levels set by Codex for reference. In this respect, there was no safety limit for Hong Kong to refer to. Therefore, none of the samples in the RA study had breached the local legislation due to their nitrate and nitrite levels. The trade representative also sought advice on the proportion of nitrate and nitrite that might be taken from cured meat products in the diet. The Chairman advised that up to 90% of nitrate in the total diet could be taken from vegetables so the proportion of taking in this substance from cured meat products was less important.

34. A trade representative noticed that there were great variances in the range of nitrate found from vegetables in the RA study and considered that the average values in the

presentation might be misleading. There was reservation with her on the advice of not recommending feeding infants below 6 months of age with vegetables as she was aware of infants under 6 months were fed with minced vegetables. She was concerned that the public might find the advice disturbing. Ms. Melva CHEN advised that the average values of nitrate and nitrite were factual data extracted from the RA study for reference of the meeting. They might vary greatly among different species of vegetables. The Chairman advised that complete data on the average values and the range of values for all 73 types of vegetables would be released when the RA study was announced in full to the public. The Chairman also advised that the advice of exclusive breastfeeding for infants up to 6 months of age with appropriate complementary foods afterwards had followed the advice of World Health Organization and might be referred to for reference.

35. A trade representative sought advice on the source of nitrate and nitrite found in vegetables. Ms. Melva CHEN advised that nitrate and nitrite occurred naturally in vegetables but the contents varied according to species, planting environment, etc. The excessive application of chemical fertilizers would increase the contents of nitrate and nitrite.

36. A trade representative sought advice on whether the RA study had covered analysis on the differences of nitrate and nitrite between organic vegetables and inorganic ones. The Chairman advised that CFS had not analyzed the differences of nitrate and nitrite levels between organic vegetables and inorganic ones. The levels would depend on the type of fertilizers. There were studies showing lower levels of nitrate and nitrite in organic vegetables but other studies showed similar levels. However, it was believed that the observation of GAP could reduce the levels of nitrate and nitrite in vegetables.

37. The Chairman said that he observed the practice of storage of vegetables in refrigeration

at retail outlets. He sought advice from the meeting on whether the practice was arising from the consideration of preventing nitrate and nitrite or it was intended for quality control. Mr. Peter JOHNSTON opined that storage of vegetables in refrigeration was not common. Refrigeration was intended for quality control. He advised that leafy vegetables were fast moving products and usually put on shelves for a short period of time. The value of storing leafy vegetables in refrigeration was therefore very low. Besides, the storage of vegetables was expensive and was not environmental friendly.

38. The Chairman summed up that consumption of vegetables was good to health and formed a part of a healthy diet. The observation of the advice of Department of Health for good health by consuming two servings of fruits and three servings of vegetables should continue. However, in choosing vegetables, more varieties should be considered. Besides, storage of vegetables in refrigeration was recommended. He anticipated that the results of the RA study would be announced in July 2010. For this reason, there was no printed information for reference of the trade at the moment.

Agenda Item 4

Any Other Business

Commencement of Nutrition Labelling Scheme

39. The Chairman advised that there were seven days to go before the NL Scheme would commence on 1 July 2010. He noticed that the media were interested in the topic and there was wide press coverage on the compliance with the NL Scheme. Shops, which were mostly small ones, had not yet been able to meet the NL requirements should speed up their actions in this respect. He appealed to traders to put more efforts in complying with the

requirements.

Food Contact Materials

40. There were high concerns in European Union (EU) on the harmful substances in food contact materials. Food contact materials referred to materials that were used to make cooking tools and eating utensils, such as nylon, ceramics, melamine, polyvinyl chloride, etc. These materials might contain harmful substances. The harmful substances might release to food and taken by human. More products exporting to EU with contents of such substances were found exceeding the regulatory levels. The Chairman suggested that exporters of food contact materials to EU should consider arranging laboratory testing for such materials to prove their safety meeting the standards of EU. He informed that the EU authority had planned to require the mandatory production of satisfactory testing certificate to verify safety of food contact materials when exporting to EU. He appealed to trade representatives to pay attention to this development and convey the news to traders who were exporters of such materials to EU.

Dried Fruits under the Nutrition Labelling Scheme

41. A trade representative enquired whether dried fruits packaged in zipped bags were prepackaged food under the scope of the NL Scheme. The Chairman advised that dried fruits without any additives were exempted from the NL Scheme. Mr. Y. K. LAI replied that dried fruits packaged in zipped bags were classified as prepackaged food and were required to meet the NL requirements. On the other hand, when these dried fruits were packed in bags with large holes and the content inside could be tampered without opening the bag, they were not prepackaged food.

Assorted Biscuits under the Nutrition Labelling Scheme

42. A trade representative enquired whether assorted biscuits with different varieties packaged in the same package were required to observe the NL requirements. The Chairman advised that there were two ways to comply with the NL requirements: either one nutrition label on the package assuming that consumers would consume all biscuits or one nutrition label for each type of assorted biscuits. He added that the same advice was available from CFS webpage for NL.

Date of Next Meeting

43. The next meeting would be held in September 2010.

44. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.