

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Notes of the Thirty-fifth Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum
held on 28 June 2012 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)
Mr. LIU Kim Man	Superintendent (Import/Export)	
Dr. Ken CHONG	Scientific Officer (Biotechnology)	
Ms. Waiky WONG	Scientific Officer (Chemical)	
Ms. Joan YAU	Scientific Officer (Pesticide Residue)	
Mr. TANG Wai Hok	Chief Health Inspector (Food Surveillance)	
Mr. CHIU Cheuk Ling	Chief Health Inspector (Food Labelling)	
Ms. CHUNG Sau Wai	Superintendent (Risk Communication)	(Secretary)

Trade Representatives

Mr. Bosco HUI	A-1 Bakery Co., (HK) (LTD)
Mr. Benedict TSUI	A-1 Bakery Co., (HK) (LTD)
Ms. Caroline YUEN	American Consulate General Hong Kong Agricultural Trade Office
Mr. TSANG Wah Him	Calbee Four Seas Co. Ltd.
Mr. Alan KWOK	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Ms. Ming CHEUNG	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Mr. YEUNG Tok Wah	Cheung Fat Ho
Ms. Grace LAU	China Dragon Inspection & Certification (H.K.) Ltd.
Mr. Jonathan CHENG	China Dragon Inspection & Certification (H.K.) Ltd.
Ms. Samantha TSANG	China Resources Vanguard (HK) Company Limited
Ms. Pandora SO	Circle K
Mr. Dennis CHAN	City Super Limited
Ms. Grace YEE	City Super Limited
Ms. May KAN	Coca-Cola China Ltd.

Ms. Marina NG	Consulate General of the Netherlands
Mr. James WONG	EDO Trading Company
Mr. Enders WONG	Eurofins Hong Kong Limited
Mr. HUI Hon man	Five Categories Non-S-Loople Food Convenor
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodscan Analytics Ltd.
Ms. Yvonne CHAN	General Mills HK Ltd.
Ms. Ada WONG	Herbalife
Mr. YUEN Cheung	HK Imported Vegetable Wholesale Merchants Assn. Ltd.
Mr. Peter Johnston	Hong Kong Retail Management Association
Ms. May LO	Hong Kong Retail Management Association
Mr. Kelvin YAU	Institution of Dining Art
Ms. Athena LEUNG	Kjeldsen & Co., (Hong Kong) Ltd.
Ms. Cecilia CHEUNG	Kjeldsen & Co., (Hong Kong) Ltd.
Ms. Elaine HAU	Kowloon Shangri-La
Ms. Alice WONG	Lee Kum Kee International Holdings
Mr. Stephen LAM	Mannings
Ms. Gloria YUEN	Marks and Spencer
Mr. Paul WONG	Matrade HK Consulate General of Malaysia
Ms. Kennie SIU	McDonald's Corp. APMEA QA
Mr. Jonathan SO	McDonald's Corp. APMEA QA
Mr. Joseph MA	Nestle Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. William KWONG	Nestle Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. LAM Tsz Mau	Nissin Foods Co., Ltd.
Mr. Herbert LEE	Nissin Foods Co., Ltd.
Ms. TAM Sau Man	Pat Chun International Ltd.
Ms. Amy FU	Pfizer Corporation Hong King Limited
Mr. Tong CHOW	Pfizer Corporation Hong Kong Limited
Ms. Caroline HO	Starbucks Coffee Concepts HK
Ms. HUI Lai Yin	Sun Yik Food Limited
Ms. Jenny KIONG	Sun Yik Food Limited
Ms. Tess WONG	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Loraine HO	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Kammy YEUNG	The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Addy WONG	Tingyi-Asahi Beverages Holding Co., Ltd.
Mr. Ronald CHOW	Tung Chun Food Manufactory Limited
Mr. Eric AU	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Mr. Attlee LAU	URC Hong Kong Co Ltd.
Mr. CHAN Chi Kong	Vitasoy International Holdings Ltd.

Mr. Anthony WONG	Viva-italia International & Wine Cellar
Ms. Susanna CHING	Viva-italia International & Wine Cellar
Mr. Willem CHAN	Winner Food Products Ltd.
Ms. LI Pui Sim	Winner Food Products Ltd.
Mr. Philip KWAN	Wrigley Asia Ltd.

In Attendance

Miss LAM Yuk-ting	Assistant Secretary for Food & Health (Food)2/Food and Health Bureau
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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

Progress of Small Volume Exemption Application

3. Mr. CHIU Cheuk Ling reported that, during the period of 1 January 2012 to 15 June 2012, 2,983 applications for Small Volume Exemption (SVE) were received. Among these applications, 2,735 had been approved and 30 rejected. There were 127 applications withdrawn and 91 applications pending processing. As at 15 June 2012, there were 20,497 SVE products for sale in the market.

4. The Chairman advised that the Nutrition Labelling (NL) Scheme was running on track whereas the Working Group on NL had held its last meeting, the 15th Meeting, on 17 April 2012 and would not hold further meetings. If there was no objection from the meeting, he suggested that this item should be removed from the agenda of future meetings of Trade Consultation Forum and that meeting was the last one where figures on SVE application were reported.

Agenda Item 2

Radiological Standard for Bottled Water under Routine Condition and Following a Radiological Emergency

5. Dr. Ken CHONG briefed the meeting on radiological standard for bottled water under routine condition and following a radiological emergency. In response to the quake-led nuclear incident in Japan last year, Centre for Food Safety (CFS) had adopted Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) guideline levels included in the General Standard for Contaminants and Toxins in Food and Feed (GSCTFF) as the standard for radionuclides in contaminated foods following a nuclear or radiological emergency. This was agreed by Expert Committee on Food Safety (ECFS).

6. Dr. Ken CHONG continued that since it was now well over one year after the radiological incident in Japan, CFS proposed to adopt the limits for radionuclides in bottled/package water as stated in the respective Codex standard for international trading under routine condition, i.e. not during a radiological emergency, known as General Standard for Bottled/Package Drinking Waters (Other Than Natural Mineral Waters) (GSB/PDW), while the limits of radionuclides for foods other than bottled/package water would continue to follow the guideline levels in GSCTFF.

7. Dr. Ken CHONG further said that the decision of adopting the GSB/PDW for bottled/package water was supported by the ECFS. The adoption of new standard would be announced to the public by means of press release before the effective date of 1 August 2012. The new standard would be applicable to bottled/package water imported from all countries including Japan. For other food commodities, ECFS noted that there was no standard for routine condition and recommended GSCTFF should continue to be adopted for import control of food from Japan and other parts of the world following a nuclear or radiological emergency. The guideline levels were widely acceptable for international trade and they provided sufficient protection for public health. CFS would continue to announce any unsatisfactory results or test results with readings, even if these results were well below Codex guideline levels, to address public concerns.

8. A trade representative sought advice on whether foods detected with minimal levels of radioactivity would continue to be disposed of voluntarily after 1 August 2012 and what was the duration of taking voluntary disposal. The Chairman and Mr. LIU Kim Man both replied that the disposal was advisory in nature. The destruction was a response to public worries despite minimal levels of contamination. The Chairman advised that the radioactivity of caesium would last for many years. Mr. LIU Kim Man supplemented that the voluntary disposal was a response of traders to display their cooperation, attention to food safety and care of public health. There was not a definite ending period for voluntary disposal as long as there were public concerns of food safety and such an arrangement was applicable to other food safety issues.

9. A trade representative sought advice on whether there were data on radioactive level of sea fish from Japan and whether there were any guidelines or recommendations to traders on

Dr. Ken CHONG advised that there were only a few products of vegetables imported from Japan detected with radioactivity levels exceeding the Codex guideline levels around March to April in 2011. The Chairman supplemented that a wide range of foods, including aquatic products, from Japan had been tested for radioactivity level and those detected with positive radioactivity were listed out on the CFS' website. Foods not listed were not detected with radioactive substances. Regarding sourcing their products, traders were at liberty to source from any place in Japan, except a few prefectures that were banned from exporting foods to Hong Kong.

10. The Chairman, noting there were no other views, advised that a press release was planned to be issued in early July 2012 to announce the adoption of new standard on 1 August 2012 for detecting radionuclides in bottled/package water imported from all countries. In light that no bottled/package water was detected with radioactive substances, the new standard should not affect trade.

Agenda Item 3

The Report on The First Hong Kong Total Diet Study: Pesticide Residues

11. Ms. Waiky WONG briefed the meeting about the First Hong Kong Total Diet Study (1st HKTDS) on Pesticide Residues (PRs). The briefing covered use of pesticides, risk assessment (RA) on PRs, introduction of the 1st HKTDS, the main findings on PRs and its recommendations. She said that pesticides analysed in the 1st HKTDS on PRs covered 85 commonly encountered pesticides or their metabolites under four pesticide groups. The four pesticide groups were as follows:

- a) Organophosphorus pesticides (OPPs);

- b) Carbamates;
- c) Pyrethrins and pyrethroids; and
- d) Dithiocarbamate metabolites.

12. Ms. Waiky WONG went through the 1st HKTDS, its objectives, methodology and main findings on PRs. She reported that the residues of all four groups of pesticides analysed were primarily found at low levels in food samples of plant origin such as vegetables and fruits. She continued that the estimated dietary exposures of the local population to all 85 pesticide residues analysed were well below the relevant safety reference values and the dietary exposures to the pesticide residues analysed would be unlikely to pose unacceptable health risks to the local population.

13. She advised that farmers should observe GAP and should use the pesticides strictly in accordance with instructions on the label. She stated that the findings re-affirmed the safety of basic dietary advice on maintaining a balanced and varied diet to include a wide variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables. The public might minimize the potential exposure to water soluble pesticide residues by washing vegetables and fruits thoroughly in clean running water and soaking the vegetables in water for one hour and then rinsing them, or alternatively blanching the vegetables in boiling water for one minute and discarding the water. To further reduce their pesticide exposure, the public could also remove the outer leaves of the vegetables or peel the vegetables and fruits as appropriate.

14. Ms. Waiky WONG said that the study report of the 1st HKTDS on PRs was uploaded to CFS website on the same day as this meeting whereas other reports would be released in phases and uploaded onto the webpage of CFS later. The Chairman supplemented that the 1st HKTDS was also announced through press release during the meeting.

15. A trade representative sought advice on the percentage of samples that exceeded the MRLs under PRs in Food Regulation. Ms. Waiky WONG advised that there was a composite sample of spring onion, composing of three individual samples, detected with methamidophos exceeding slightly the MRL under the Pesticide Residue in Food Regulation. Laboratory testing of follow-up samples that collected from the same sources had not detected any methamidophos.

16. A trade representative suggested that Food and Environmental Hygiene Department should assure the public with the findings of the 1st HKTDS on PRs that consuming vegetables was quite safe and should correct the impression with the public caused by a media report on sub-standards of vegetable farming at Huizhou, the Mainland, published by an environmental protection interest group. The farm filmed in the report was in fact accredited by Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) under GAP programme in January 2012, shortly before the report was published. The Chairman advised that there was inspection programme for vegetable farms in the Mainland that supplied vegetables to Hong Kong in collaboration with AFCD and staff of AFCD might be invited to share with the Trade consultation forum on the inspection programme for farms in the Mainland.

17. A trade representative sought advice on the source of samples tested in the 1st HKTDS and the main countries of origin of these samples. Ms. Waiky WONG advised that the samples were collected at various retail outlets in the market. It all depended on the origins of food products that were available for sale in the market at time of collecting the samples for laboratory testing.

18. A trade representative sought advice on whether organochlorine was one of the pesticide groups in the study under the 1st HKTDS. Ms. Waiky WONG advised that organochlorine was one of pesticide groups that came under the study in the 1st HKTDS and laboratory testing on this pesticide group was still undergoing. It was expected that the results on this would be announced in 2014. The list of pesticides that were covered in the 1st HKTDS was available on CFS website for reference. The Chairman supplemented that organochlorine was very stable in nature and the laboratory testing were accorded to the stability of substances. Nevertheless, the 1st HKTDS had included this pesticide group in the study in view of international concerns over this pesticide group.

19. The Chairman advised that the detection of PRs in food in the 1st HKTDS was expected but this did not suggest an unsafe situation and the vast majority of these PRs were at very low levels, and their dietary exposures were far below the safety reference values. Another message was that it was safe to consume lots of fruits and vegetables, following the advice of the Department of Health, after processing them properly.

Agenda Item 4

Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation

20. Ms. Joan YAU briefed the meeting on Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (the Regulation). The Regulation was passed by Legislative Council on 6 June 2012 and it would come into force on 1 August 2014 after a grace period of about two years. She presented to the meeting details of the Regulation section by section and its schedules, which included interpretation, application, import and sale of food containing pesticide residues that were allowed, principles for determining MRL / Extraneous Maximum Residue Limit (EMRL) for certain food (other than compounded food), principles for determining

21. Ms. Joan YAU advised that a set of guidelines on the Regulation would be drawn up to prepare trade for coping with the Regulation when it came into force in 2014. The draft guidelines would be discussed with trade representatives at technical meeting. She advised that the set of guidelines would involve categorisation of food, such as the coverage for leaf vegetables, to facilitate trade in interpreting and understanding the Regulation. In fact, a set of frequently asked questions and answers in response to questions at technical meetings held was available on CFS website for reference of trade. More guidelines would be drawn up to assist trade complying with the Regulation. Besides, a database would be set up on CFS website for Schedule 1 to the Regulation for trade to search the required standards of pesticides. Briefing sessions would also be organised for trade.

22. Trade representatives sought advice on the law enforcement of the Regulation and whether warning letter would be issued prior to prosecution to allow trader to rectify the situation. Mr. TANG Wai Hok advised that samples would be collected from various levels after 1 August 2014 for enforcing the Regulation. Currently, CFS food surveillance programme monitored foods including vegetables and fruits at import, wholesale and retail levels for microbiological examination and chemical analysis, such as pesticide residues offered for sale to ensure their fitness for human consumption in accordance with Section 54 under Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, Cap. 132. Steps in law enforcement would resemble the same as those existing actions. The Chairman supplemented that, during the grace period, PRs detected with levels exceeding the MRLs/EMRLs under the Regulation but not contravening Section 54 of Cap. 132 would not lead to prosecution. However, traders would be advised to rectify the situation accordingly

23. A trade representative sought advice on whether the procedures of importing agricultural products would be affected after the Regulation came into force. Mr. LIU Kim Man advised that the procedures would not be affected but standards under the Regulation would be referred to for laboratory testing.

24. The Chairman advised that a lot of work would be required in the coming two years to prepare for the Regulation coming into force. The schedules now adopted in the Regulation would be updated before 1 August 2014 to include new standards of PRs that would be endorsed by Codex in July 2013.

Any Other Business

Regional Symposium

25. The Secretary referred to a leaflet tabled at the meeting and advised that a Regional Symposium “Food Claims: Truth and Myth” would be held on 29 and 30 October 2012 at Hotel Nikko Hong Kong. Participation would be free of charge. Enrolment would be announced on CFS website in due course. Abstracts would be invited on the following three topics:

- a) Development of Nutrition and Health Claims;
- b) Regulation, Compliance, and Impact; and
- c) Scientific Substantiation and Communication.

Guidance on submission of abstracts could be found from CFS website. There were several

dates to note: deadline for submission of abstracts on 15 July 2012, notification of the evaluation results on 15 August 2012 and submission of presentation material on 24 September 2012. Interested parties were suggested to keep in view the announcement on CFS website and were encouraged to enroll. The Chairman supplemented that the abstracts might be presented in different formats, including through the delivery of a speech at the symposium.

Gutter Oil

26. A trade representative sought advice on whether there was any case of gutter oil for human consumption found in Hong Kong. Mr. TANG Wai Hok advised that samples of used oil had been collected for laboratory testing with no unsatisfactory results revealed so far. A trade representative advised that cooked oil in Hong Kong was processed locally and recycled for industrial use. The Chairman noted the same and advised that he was not aware of any case of recycling cooked oil for human consumption in Hong Kong.

Canola Oil

27. A trade representative sought advice on whether canola oil was safe for human consumption in light of a short message circulated via email informing that canola oil was not healthy. The Chairman advised that the message had come to the attention of CFS and due advice was already offered to the public. The advice was available on CFS website. In general, canola oil, unlike rapeseed oil, was fit for human consumption as it was low in saturated fat and contained high proportion of unsaturated fat.

Date of Next Meeting

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

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