

From Food Incidents to Crisis Management



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Outline of Presentation

- An introduction to CFS
- Definition of food incidents
- Definition of crisis and the crisis management cycle
- Melamine incident (2008) as an illustration
- Lessons learned

Introduction on the Centre for Food Safety

- Ensuring food safety is a major policy objective of the HKSARG. To enhance the food safety regulatory functions and to meet the growing public expectation for better food safety standards, the CFS was established in May 2006 under the FEHD for more focusing on the approach on controlling and regulating food safety.



Interdepartmental Cooperation



Food and Health Bureau (食物及衛生局)



Organization of FEHD and CFS

Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department
(食物環境衛生署)

Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Environmental
Hygiene Branch
(環境衛生部)

Centre for Food
Safety
(食物安全中心)

Administration
and Development
Branch (行政及發
展部)

Controller, Centre for Food Safety

Food Surveillance
and Control
Division
(Risk Management)
(食物監察及管制科)

Risk Assessment
and
Communication
Division
(風險評估及傳達科)

Centre
Administration
Division
(行政科)



The Centre for Food Safety

食物安全中心

- Established on 2 May 2006
- Currently about 550 staff
- Multi-disciplinary team of professionals –
 - Public health physicians and nurses
 - Veterinarians
 - Health inspectors
 - Food chemists, nutritionists, food toxicologists, food biotechnologists, food scientists, food safety officers and others

Tripartite Collaboration

Government
(政府)



Consumers
(消費者)

Trade
(業界)

Hong Kong: A Gastronomic Melting Pot for 7 Million People

- Free port
- Densely populated international city
- Little local food production
- Over 95% of food consumed is imported
- Large volume and variety of food from around the world

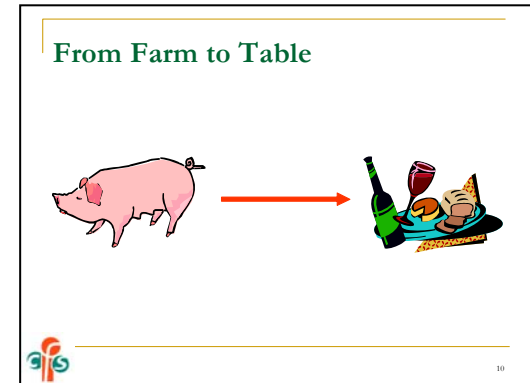


Strategy

■ Adopts Integrated Approach

□ From “Farm to Table”

(從農場到餐桌)



■ Risk Analysis Framework

(風險分析架構)

□ Risk Assessment (風險評估)

□ Risk Management (風險管理)

□ Risk Communication (風險傳達)



Definition of Food Incidents

- Food incidents refer to the incidents or events which have potential food safety implications and are actively evaluated by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS).
- *FSA definition: Any event where, based on the information available, there are concerns about actual or suspected threats to the safety or quality of food that could require intervention to protect consumers' interests.*



Food Incident Surveillance System

- Monitor close to 40 websites of food/ health authorities
- Daily report on Food Incident Surveillance
- FIS reports compiled by Risk Assessment Section
 - 2006 326
 - 2007 1041
 - 2008 985
 - 2009 1093
 - 2010 986

Proactive Food Surveillance and Alert

- Manages a 3-tier food surveillance programme at import, wholesale and retail levels



Risk Assessment (風險評估)

- Forms the scientific basis of risk management and communication
- Four components : hazard identification(確定食物危害), hazard characterization (分析危害的特徵), exposure assessment (評估市民受影響的程度) and risk characterization (分析食物風險的特徵)
- Conducts regularly on a variety of food safety issues that are of public health significance
- Results used in setting food standards and translated into food safety information for public



Food Standard Setting

食物安全標準訂定

- Regular review on food standards and food labelling
 - To protect public health and keep the local food standards in line with International development (e.g. Codex) and advancement of food science and technology
- Factors to be considered in review
 1. Public health concern; 2. Local food standards;
 3. International standards; 4. Stakeholder concern



Risk Management (風險管理)

- Import Control (入口管制)
- Food Surveillance (食物監察)
- Managing Food Incidents (食物事故處理)
- Food Standard Setting (食物安全標準訂定)



Managing Food Incidents

- Monitor close to 40 websites of food/health authorities
- Daily report on Food Incident Surveillance to senior management and press officers of CFS, FEHD and FHB
- Manage incidents proactively and efficiently
- Expanding legislative power on banning import/ food recall
- Balance between accuracy and speed in communicating with public and the trade
- Establishing food tracing system



Crisis

- “ An abnormal situation, or even perception, which is beyond the scope of every day business and which threatens the operation, safety and reputation of an organization- UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills.
- “A low probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly- Pearson and Clair(1998)

Crisis Management

- The process of identifying a potential issue or crisis and coordinating organizational or inter-organizational responses



The Crisis Management Cycle



The Crisis Management Cycle

- Preparation- dealing with issues such as planning, simulations and training
- Management – dealing with issues such as allocation and deployment of resources, command systems and communications
- Evaluation- dealing with issues such as post crisis lesson learning, debriefing and accountability



Example : The Melamine Incident 2008

- Source of information
 - ❑ Food Incident Surveillance
 - ❑ Media reports
 - ❑ Communications with AQSIQ
 - ❑ Others



The Melamine Incident

- Market surveillance
- Sampling strategy
- Laboratory readiness
- Reports by other jurisdictions

The Melamine Incident

- First positive result on 16 September (yoghurt flavored ice bar 15ppm)
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Communication

The Melamine Incident

- Risk Assessment
 - Discussions with local and overseas experts
 - Expert Committee on Food Safety

The Melamine Incident

■ Risk Management

- ❑ Market surveillance (up to 7 Apr 2009, 5608 sample taken, 76 failed(0.71%).
- ❑ Legal standards
 - First place to set legal limits of melamine in food
 - Amended the Harmful Substances in Food Regulation
 - Gazetted on 23 September 2008 and effective on the same day.

The Melamine Incident

- Risk Communication:
 - Press briefings
 - Daily press release
 - Daily update to webpage
 - Telephone hotline:
 - 1823, DH, CFS
 - CFS (as at 7 Apr : 7,771 calls, average 265 daily in the first two weeks since 16 Sep 2008)
 - Written enquiries (over 1000)

The Melamine Incident

- Organization response
 - ❑ Validation of information (accuracy vs timeliness)
 - ❑ Expertise in house and external
 - ❑ Daily internal briefings and sitreps
 - ❑ Administrative and logistic support
 - ❑ Flexible deployment of resources
 - ❑ Staff morale
 - ❑ Public enquiries
 - ❑ Media enquiries
 - ❑ LegCo briefings and questions
 - ❑ Trade enquiries
 - ❑ Request for tests and access to information
 - ❑ Critical period for telephone hotlines
 - ❑ Legal issues

The Melamine Incident

- Inter-organization response
 - FHB
 - GL
 - DH
 - HA
 - DoJ
 - Expert Committee on Food Safety
 - Trade
 - Private Laboratories

The Melamine Incident

- International arena
 - INFOSAN
 - AQSIQ
 - MOH
 - Food authorities in neighbouring regions

Expert Group on Melamine Incident

- Set up on 26 September 2008
- Chaired by SFH
- 3 Subgroups
 - Health Services
 - Treatment
 - Food Safety, Supply and Control
- 3 Reports submitted to the Chief Secretary
 - 20 Oct 2008, 21 Jan 2009, 15 Apr 2009

Crisis Management- Post Crisis Evaluation and Learning

■ Risk Analysis Framework

□ Risk Assessment

- Scientific basis vs expectations for “zero tolerance”

□ Risk Communication

- Understanding stakeholders’ concerns and worries
- Language that laymen understand

□ Risk Management

- Organisational and structural support
- Preparedness
- Effectiveness and appropriateness when information was limited



Post Crisis Evaluation and Learning

- Risk Assessment
 - Enlist expertise
- Risk Communication
 - More effective use of IT
 - Access to information
- Risk Management
 - Organizational and structural support
 - Clear roles and chain of command
 - Surge capacity and flexibility
 - Preparedness: contingency plans, on-call system, laboratory readiness, conducting crisis exercise
 - Knock on effects on other organizations
 - Introduce further legal instruments



Critical Tasks for leaders during crisis – Boin et al (2005)

- Sense making
- Decision making
- Meaning making
- Termination
- Learning

From Food Incidents to Crisis Management

- No simple set of principles
- Experience Sharing
- Inter-sectoral collaboration
- International networking
- Contribution as a WHO Collaborating Centre

Thank You

