

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)115

(Question Serial No. 1873)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

To ensure food safety, it is stipulated under the laws of Hong Kong that one should not bring uncooked meat, poultry or eggs into Hong Kong without a health certificate issued by the place of origin and an import licence issued in Hong Kong. The work of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department involves conducting risk assessment on food, and exercising import control on high-risk food and live food animals. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

1. How many cases in each month of the past 2 years in which members of the public were found, with the assistance of quarantine detector dogs, to have brought regulated food into Hong Kong illegally? Does the Department have any plans to increase the number of quarantine detector dogs and their duty hours? If yes, what are the details? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?
2. In respect of activities of cross-boundary purchase of regulated food by agents (including placing orders using social network groups and then making self-pickup from local retail stores/collection points or direct delivery of the goods), has the Department taken any targeted actions to prevent such activities from posing food safety risks to members of the public? If yes, what are the details? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?
3. As there are views that raw seafood and aquatic products are also high-risk food, will the Government consider listing them as regulated food? If yes, what are the details? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?
4. What further specific plans or measures are in place to reduce the number of cases of members of the public bringing regulated food into Hong Kong illegally?

Asked by: Hon SHIU Ka-fai (LegCo internal reference no.: 34)

Reply:

1. Under the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK), each consignment of imported game, meat, poultry and eggs must be accompanied by a health certificate issued by the relevant authority of the place of origin or import permission from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). In 2023 and 2024, the Quarantine Detector Dog Unit of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) under FEHD

detected a total of 1 099 suspected non-compliance cases. The monthly figures are as follows:

Month Year	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Yearly total
2023	11	15	16	21	47	38	49	48	38	39	35	26	383
2024	58	35	35	40	41	74	74	65	53	78	73	90	716

With the commissioning of new land boundary control points, the number of quarantine detector dogs has increased from 4 in 2019 to 7 at present to combat inbound persons illegally bringing regulated food (e.g. raw meat, poultry and eggs) into Hong Kong. CFS will flexibly adjust their duty hours to cope with operational needs.

2. Hong Kong's food safety legislation mainly regulates food for sale in Hong Kong. Under the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) and the relevant legislation, the sale or offer for sale of restricted foods specified in Schedule 2 to the Food Business Regulation through website or online platform accounts requires an online sale of restricted food permit. The import of fresh meat or eggs is also regulated by the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK). CFS has been maintaining close liaison and exchanging intelligence with other law enforcement departments, including the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), to conduct joint blitz operations at various boundary control points, and arranging quarantine detector dogs to assist the law enforcement officers at land boundary control points in their duties. CFS will continue to collect more intelligence and evidence through various channels and also deploy enforcement actions in the light of the actual situation to crack down on the sale of controlled food through cross-boundary purchase by agents.
3. The Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) stipulates that any food, including seafood and aquatic products, intended for sale for human consumption in Hong Kong must be fit for human consumption. Moreover, the food safety standards under the laws of Hong Kong apply to aquatic products as well.

In addition, Cap. 132X stipulates that the operation of any food business which involves the sale of fresh fish requires a fresh provision shop licence issued by FEHD. Any person who sells restricted foods specified in Schedule 2 to Cap. 132X, including oyster to be eaten in raw state, sashimi and shellfish, must obtain written permission from FEHD. The Government will keep in view the regulatory arrangements for different types of imported food, taking into account all pertinent factors.

4. CFS maintains close liaison with C&ED to conduct joint enforcement operations at various boundary control points to combat the illegal import of regulated food. In 2024, CFS initiated more than 2 000 prosecutions against persons illegally bringing raw meat or poultry eggs into Hong Kong, and the maximum fine imposed was HK\$6,000.

CFS also reminds the public through various channels (e.g. websites, posters, leaflets and social media, etc.) to comply with the laws of Hong Kong when bringing food into Hong Kong, whether from overseas or the Mainland. CFS and C&ED carry out publicity activities (including distributing leaflets to educate the public) and joint enforcement operations from time to time at various boundary control points.

Meanwhile, CFS will continue to step up its publicity and education work at various boundary control points by displaying banners, easy-mount frames and posters along passenger pathways and at public transport interchanges, and broadcasting audio messages at boundary control points as further reminders to the public.

To further enhance public awareness of compliance with the relevant legislation, CFS has expanded its publicity channels through placing advertisements in public transport systems connecting to boundary control points, including the bodies and the back of seats of buses and minibuses, railway station concourses and train compartments. CFS and C&ED have also made joint visits to the District Councils of districts near the boundary to convey at the community level the message that no regulated food shall be brought into Hong Kong illegally, which serves as a reminder that people who do so will face prosecution. In addition, CFS has added a “Frequently Asked Questions on Imported Food Control” section on its website for public reference to better inform the public about the foods regulated under Cap. 132AK.

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