

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)075

(Question Serial No. 3172)

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:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department initiates investigation into food safety incidents. In this connection, please advise this Committee:

- (a) of (i) the number of investigations initiated by the Department into reported cases of food poisoning, (ii) the time taken to conclude each case and (iii) the costs involved in each of the past 3 years;
- (b) of the number of food incidents into which investigation was completed by the Department and the number of those still under investigation in the past 3 years;
- (c) whether the Department will compile an investigation report and make recommendations on prevention for each food incident after completing the investigation; if yes, the details; if no, the reason(s); and
- (d) whether the Department has regularly reviewed the food incident investigation mechanism and optimised the procedures based on the review results; if yes, the details; if no, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon CHAN Wing-yan, JoePHY (LegCo internal reference no.: 36)

Reply:

- (a) Under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), food poisoning is a statutorily notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong. All registered medical practitioners are required to report suspected food poisoning cases to the Department of Health, which will then refer those in connection with local food business premises and food industry to the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for follow-up. From 2023 to 2025, CFS received 219, 192 and 113 referrals of food poisoning cases respectively. CFS launched immediate investigation into every referred case, including conducting on-site investigation, inspecting the food preparation process, food storage and environmental hygiene, collecting food/environmental samples, implementing prevention and control measures, and providing health education on food safety and health to the persons-in-charge and staff. In general,

CFS will consolidate the relevant information within 24 hours after completing the preliminary investigation. CFS does not keep a breakdown of the costs incurred.

- (b)-(c) CFS has established the Food Incident Surveillance System (FISS) to monitor and review food incidents occurring outside Hong Kong. It also maintains close liaison with the Mainland and overseas food safety authorities to facilitate rapid information exchange and swift follow-up measures in response to food incidents. When the food products concerned are found available for sale in the local market, CFS will take various risk management actions, including instructing stop sale of, remove from shelves or recall the affected food products, and issuing press releases and food incident posts. In 2023, 2024 and 2025, CFS identified 18, 20 and 25 Hong Kong-related food incidents through its proactive monitoring of food incidents outside Hong Kong, and took immediate action and issued press releases accordingly. In addition, CFS implements the Food Surveillance Programme and adopts risk management measures against unsatisfactory samples, such as tracing their sources, informing the authorities of the places of origin, instructing vendors to stop sale of, remove from shelves and recall the affected batches of foods, making public announcements and explaining to the public the food safety risk involved. CFS has completed the investigation into the food incidents concerned and taken appropriate follow-up actions.
- (d) CFS has earlier on introduced the application of information technology. Apart from the FISS mentioned above, CFS has established the Food Incident Management System, which records the follow-up actions of its various sections more effectively and enhances its management, thus optimising the procedures for managing food incidents and enabling prompt handling and announcement of the incidents.

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