

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)079

(Question Serial No. 1098)

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:

Earlier on, a number of primary school students suffered from food poisoning after consuming lunch provided by their schools. Preliminary investigations indicated that it was caused by some food items prepared too early in advance. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is responsible for inspecting licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes across the territory. It also collects lunch box samples for testing. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

1. What were the respective numbers of licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes and lunch box samples collected in each of the past 3 years?
2. Further to the above question, what were the respective numbers of immediate rectifications carried out, warnings and health advice issued and prosecutions initiated regarding the licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes in each of the past 3 years?
3. Are sampling locations confined to food factory premises under the current mechanism? Will samples be collected for testing upon their delivery to schools to find out whether problems arise from premature preparation of food or during transportation?
4. Apart from the hygiene conditions of the licensed food factories, will vehicles transporting lunch boxes or food ingredients be inspected to ensure their hygiene conditions meets the required standards?
5. Has the Government introduced new hygiene requirements for licensed food factories supplying lunch boxes to school and the transportation process in the light of recent public concerns about prepared food and related food poisoning cases?
6. Further to the above question, will the Department make a request for a review of and revision to the Handbook of Selection of Lunch Suppliers, which was last revised in 2019?

Asked by: Hon CHIK Kit-ling, Elaine (LegCo internal reference no.: 106)

Reply:

1. & 3. For food safety surveillance, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has been, through its Food Surveillance Programme and according to the risk-based principle, collecting school

lunch box samples from licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes and at the school level for testing. CFS collected 279, 177 and 123 school lunch box samples for microbiological and chemical testing in the 3 years between 2023 and 2025 respectively. The test results of all samples were satisfactory.

2. FEHD not only collects samples from licensed food factories supplying school lunch boxes for testing but also inspects the hygiene conditions of these premises. The numbers of immediate rectifications carried out, warnings and health advice issued, and prosecutions initiated by FEHD in respect of the hygiene issues of these premises in each of the past 3 years are as follows:

Year	Number of immediate rectifications	Number of warnings issued	Number of health advice issued	Number of prosecutions
2023	9	110	239	2
2024	26	111	228	1
2025	8	100	234	0

4. In addition to conducting routine inspections of the hygiene conditions of licensed food factories, FEHD officers also launch investigations and take follow-up action if they have concerns about their operations or receive relevant complaints. The investigations may cover the transportation arrangements for lunch boxes and the cleanliness and hygiene conditions of delivery vehicles. If any irregularity is found, FEHD will immediately take appropriate follow-up action.
5. All licensed food factories must strictly comply with the legal requirements and licensing conditions regarding environmental hygiene and food safety, otherwise FEHD will take enforcement action. Repeated violations by food factories will result in suspension of operations or even cancellation of licences. Besides, CFS has organised a series of online seminars for schools and lunch box suppliers, highlighting food safety hazards, and emphasising the need for vigilance among teaching staff and food handlers, as well as requiring suppliers to adhere to good hygiene practices when preparing food. Moreover, CFS has published a “A Practical Guide for Ensuring Food Safety in Schools and Childcare Facilities”, which covers advice on selecting lunch suppliers, for reference by schools and childcare facilities.
6. The Department of Health (DH), the Education Bureau (EDB) and related stakeholders have jointly developed a series of reference materials which were compiled into a “Handbook of Selection of Lunch Suppliers” (the Handbook) for reference by different parties. It includes information such as nutritional requirements and recommended procedures, as well as templates to facilitate schools’ and parents’ selection of lunch suppliers. EDB, the Environmental Protection Department, FEHD, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Innovation and Technology Commission may revise the relevant circulars or guidelines from time to time, so schools should also refer to the most updated information when selecting their lunch suppliers. DH may also review and update the Handbook from time to time. The latest version incorporating guidelines updated by the relevant departments in 2024 and 2025 has also been posted online

for public access. For details, please refer to the webpage below:
https://school.eatsmart.gov.hk/en/content_salt.aspx?id=6204

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