

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of the Thirty-ninth Meeting
Held at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, 21 February 2008
at Room 2005, 20/F, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central**

Professor YUEN Kwok-yung, SBS, JP	<i>(Chairman)</i>
Professor HO Wing-shing, John	
Professor HO Suk-ching, Sara	
Dr. TANG Shuk-ming, Winnie	
Mr. KWOK Chun-wah, Jimmy, MH, JP	
Mr. LAU Yiu-fai, Ronald	
Mrs. Elizabeth MOK	
Dr. YUE Kwok-to	
Miss LAM Wai-ling, Leona, JP	
Mr. FONG Wo, Felix, JP	
Miss LAM Chui-lin	
Dr. LO King-shun	
Dr. Veronica LEONG	
Mrs. Stella HUNG, JP	Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)
Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing, JP	Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Dr. LEUNG Ting-hung, JP	Head, Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health

Absent with Apologies

Professor WU Shiu-sun, Rudolf	
Dr. WONG Sin-ying, Lillian	
Dr. LO Chi-kin, JP	
Mr. CHEUK Wing-hing, JP	Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

In Attendance

Food and Health Bureau

Ms. Olivia NIP, JP	Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)
Mrs. Angelina CHEUNG	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)1
Ms. Rhonda LO, JP	Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)3
Mr. LIU Kim-man	Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) Special Duties 3

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr. Constance CHAN, JP	Controller, Centre for Food Safety
Dr. Y Y HO	Consultant(Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication)
Dr. S Y LEE	Assistant Director (Food Surveillance and Control)

Opening Remarks

1. The Chairman welcomed Ms. Rhonda LO, Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food)3, and members to the meeting.

Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of the Minutes of the Last Meeting

2. Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing proposed to re-write paragraph 9 as follows –

“Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing said that Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) had started to collect oyster samples regularly at Lau Fau Shan since early 2007. They would make use of the collected data to analyze the condition of oyster there, which would in turn provide a reference in considering whether AFCD might need to provide any technical support to oyster farmers. She emphasized that all oysters, whether they came from Lau Fau Shan or not, were subject to existing food safety control and would be regulated under the proposed Food Safety Bill, including the

registration requirement for food distributors. Mr. CHEUK Wing-hing said that the sale of oysters would be controlled at the distribution levels through registration of distributors and at retail level by Cap. 132 which required all food to be fit for human consumption. He said that suspected consignment of oysters would undergo “hold and test” under the existing legislation. They would be confiscated and disposed of if found to be unfit for human consumption.”

3. Members accepted the proposed amendments and confirmed the minutes of the last meeting.

Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Last Meeting

4. There was no matter arising from the minutes of last meeting.

Agenda Item 3 : Confidential Item discussed

Agenda Item 4 : Summary of Recent Food Incidents (ACFEH Paper 02/2008)

5. Dr. S.Y. Lee introduced the paper.
6. A Member asked if sale of all canned products of MaLing brand, especially canned meat products, had been suspended during the past food incident of luncheon meat products. He further asked if the food incident only restricted to a specific MaLing brand and any reason behind for testing malachite green in meat products. Dr. Constance CHAN replied that as information provided by Singapore included brands which were available in Hong Kong, the CFS had immediately collected samples of the concerned canned pork products from local market for testing metabolite of nitrofurans. Subsequently, malachite green was also tested in response to further media report that malachite green was detected in MaLing luncheon pork in Canada. One sample of Shanghai MaLing Pork Luncheon Meat B2 (Less Sodium) was found to contain minute quantity of nitrofurans metabolite and two other samples of MaLing brand canned products, which were manufactured by Beijing MaLing, were found to contain minute quantities of nitrofurans metabolite and malachite green respectively. The analytical results had been referred to the Mainland authorities for follow up action. The CFS had contacted the distributors of the concerned products and they initiated a recall and suspended sale of all pork products of the same brand instead of limiting to

the products concerned.

7. A Member said that it was beneficial to let the public and traders to have more information regarding this food incident during the consultation exercise of the proposed Food Safety Bill. Dr. Constance CHAN replied that CFS had been releasing the information on special food incidents to the traders and public as a way to promote food safety.

8. A Member believed that malachite green found in meat products might be originated from animal feed for pigs and poultry, for example, meat and bone meal. He asked if there was any hint of the source traced and any follow up action taken. Dr. Constance CHAN said that they would refer the incidents to the related authorities of import country for their investigation, follow up action and prevent recurrence.

9. The Chairman asked if information of manufacturers from which unsatisfactory samples were taken during the recent food surveillance on Lunar New Year food had been released. Dr. S Y LEE replied that 15 unsatisfactory samples were found during the surveillance but not all of their sources could be traced due to lack of documentary proof. On the other hand, some sources could be traced as most of the Chinese New Year foods, or their ingredients, were imported from the Mainland.

10. A Member agreed that the said food incidents could be used as valuable materials to promote the concept of source tracing during the proposed Food Safety Bill consultation exercise. She asked if there was any plan to publicize the past food incident information in a user friendly manner with a view to promoting food safety. She added that it was worth to consider categorizing the information and presenting it in the form of a summary. Dr. Constance CHAN replied that currently there was a Food Safety Focus which had already served the purpose. Since 2007, food surveillance results in the form of Food Safety Report had been released on a bi-monthly basis. CFS would strengthen collaboration with the media on releasing information of foods with high risk in 2008.

11. A Member agreed that it was crucial to determine sampling and analyzing methods. For example, the results might be different if the content and the package were heated up by steaming together or separately in the recent meat dumpling pesticide poisoning cases in Japan. He noticed that manufacturers' information from which satisfactory or unsatisfactory food samples had been taken was released in Shenzhen's newspapers. Such approach was not adopted in Hong Kong and only with press release on individual food incidents. He suggested that as a more effective measure of

communication with the public, such information should be released in a continuous pattern. Dr. Constance CHAN said that the GL had adopted internationally accepted testing method in the recent meat dumpling incident. However, analysis conducted by GL only focused on food safety but not criminal investigation. She added that all concerned products had been recalled and suspended for sale and it only involved one importer. Dr. CHAN added that with effect from 2007, detailed information of the unsatisfactory samples, for example photographs, unsatisfactory level, brand name, batch number and places from which samples were taken etc had been provided to the reporters.

12. A Member asked if the bi-monthly Food Safety Report had been uploaded in CFS website. She said that the uploaded information should be updated upon completion of cases investigation with a view to keeping the public informed of the latest development. Dr. Constance CHAN replied that the test results had been uploaded in the CFS website. Details of the concerned manufacturers would be released to the media upon request. CFS had enhanced the press release mechanism by introducing a Rapid Alert System with effect from 1 February 2008. Traders could participate by means of registration and they would receive information regarding food incidents through fax, email or even SMS in case of emergency.

13. The Chairman said that the reason for discussion of recent food incidents in each meeting was aiming at keeping members abreast of the updated Government policy on food. Members' opinions would be beneficial to the Committee.

Agenda Item 5 : Any Other Business

14. A Member asked if FEHD had taken any action on the recent report of Bisphenol A (BPA) leakage from milk bottles which might affect baby's health although they were not food but only food containers. Dr. LEUNG Ting-hung said that as milk bottles were grouped under the category of General Consumables, just like containers and cosmetics, they were regulated by related general legislation instead of a specific law. Dr. Constance CHAN said that U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) and EU considered current evidence did not suggest BPA pose significant health risk. They would keep close monitor on international research and development in this area.

15. A Member asked if there was any updated information on the project of the central poultry slaughtering plant (the Plant). Mrs. Stella HUNG replied that they were actively studying the proposal. In the meantime, members of

the Committee, experts and public were welcome to offer suggestions or opinions through the Food and Health Bureau (the Bureau) or FEHD.

16. A Member said that he was a member of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries (ACAF) under AFCD. He learnt that poultry farms expressed deep concern on the proposal of central poultry slaughtering plant as it would affect their business. It was necessary to keep stakeholders informed of the updated information as early as possible so that they could decide on their way forward. Mrs. Stella HUNG replied that the Administration was still considering the subject and would consult the ACFEH, LegCo and other stakeholders. She said that AFCD was also involved in the project and could update ACAF as appropriate. She understood the stakeholders had deep concern to the project and they could reflect their views on operational mode of the Plant to AFCD or FHB. Mrs. HUNG added that the Plant was scheduled to commission in 2011 and a lot of preparation work had to be done in between.

17. A Member said that some stakeholders could not see a bright future for the agricultural sector and enquired about the current policy. Miss CHEUNG Siu-hing said that ACAF and its subcommittees provided a forum for related issues to be discussed. She noted that indeed the next meeting of the ACAF livestock subcommittee would be held in the following week. She suggested that the Member could reflect his views during the meeting or anytime to AFCD direct. The Chairman said that Hong Kong should retain some chicken and fish farms as emergency in case of any short of food supply from the Mainland. They would be the main sources of animal protein during the bridge-over period.

18. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Secretariat
Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene
Food and Health Bureau
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