For discussion on 25 May 2009 **ACFEH Paper 98**

Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene

Summary of Recent Food Incidents

Thematic surveillance on popular food items: cart noodles

From March to April 2009, the CFS collected 292 samples of various ingredients of cart noodles from about 130 premises including cooked food stalls, food factories and restaurants, for chemical and microbiological tests.

2. Except for a sample of cattle offal collected from a restaurant, which was found to contain *Salmonella*, all the other samples were satisfactory. The CFS took follow-up action, including issuing warning letter. A press release on the surveillance results was issued and relevant advice on food safety was provided to the public in April 2009.

Food incident on peanut products with suspected Salmonella contamination: An update

3. In January 2009, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the United States (US) reported an ongoing multistate outbreak of human infections due to *Salmonella* Typhimurium. Some cases were related to peanut-containing products produced by the Peanut Corporation of America. Some food manufacturers in the US recalled their products which used the affected peanut-containing products as ingredients.

4. As reported in ACFEH Paper 5/2009, the CFS had been in close contact with the US authorities since the start of the incident. The US Authorities undertook to inform CFS should they find that any affected products had been exported to Hong Kong. Though no such alert was received initially, the CFS kept the trade informed of latest developments of the US recall process. On January 29, the CFS was informed by the US authorities that certain batches of granola bars suspected of contamination by *Salmonella* were found to have been exported to Hong Kong.

5. Since our last report, the CFS was again informed on 17 April that six peanut products suspected of having been contaminated with *Salmonella* might have been exported to Hong Kong. The CFS alerted traders to stop selling the affected products and issued press release to appeal to the public not to consume them.

6. In response to the *Salmonella* contamination incident in the US, the CFS had collected around 30 samples of peanut butter and related products in the local market for testing of *Salmonella* and all the results were satisfactory. Up to the end of April, close to 4 000 products from the same company were on the recall list. The CFS would continue to closely monitor the situation.

Food incident on pistachio products with suspected Salmonella contamination

7. Since March 2009, the United States Food and Drugs Administration (US FDA) detected *Salmonella* in the products and the environment of a food production plant. FDA therefore issued a series of recalls on a number of pistachio and pistachio products. Pistachio from the affected lots, and products that contained pistachio from the affected lots, were being recalled. Up to the end of April, over 600 products were recalled.

8. The CFS had been in close contact with the US authorities since the start of the incident. The US authorities undertook to inform the CFS should they find that any affected products had been exported to Hong Kong. Though no such alert was received initially, the CFS kept the trade informed of the latest developments of the US recall process.

9. On April 3, the CFS was informed by a local distributor that the company had imported the concerned pistachios and sold them to several retailers. The distributor stopped selling the remaining stock. Follow-up and mark-and-seal action was taken by the CFS on the unsold goods.

10. On April 7, the CFS was informed by the US authorities that two Hong Kong companies had imported the concerned pistachios in late 2008. Some of the concerned products were sold in loose form at supermarkets and department stores during Christmas and the Lunar New Year period, and were sold out by April.

11. On both occasions, the CFS appealed to the trade to stop selling the concerned pistachios should there be remaining stocks, and issued press

release to appeal to the public not to consume them.

12. In response to this incident, the CFS had collected around 20 samples of pistachios and related products for testing of *Salmonella* and all results were satisfactory. There was no local human infection traced to consumption of the affected products. The CFS would continue to closely monitor the situation.

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