

Consumer Liaison Group Newsletter

4

Mar 2013

~ Certificate Presentation Ceremony ~

The 4th Consumer Liaison Group (CLG) Certification Presentation Ceremony was successfully held on 8 December 2012 at the Lai Chi Kok Government Offices. The legislative proposals relating to formula products and foods intended for infants and young children in Hong Kong were also introduced to CLG members at the ceremony. Dr HO Yuk-yin, Consultant of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) first gave a welcoming speech, Ms Melissa LIU, a Scientific Officer of the CFS, then briefed members on the proposals to regulate the nutritional composition of infant formulae and nutrition labelling of infant formulae, follow-up formulae and other foods for infants and young children. In the question and answer session, CLG members raised questions and offered opinions on the legislative proposals. The Ceremony began at 2:45pm. Professor MA Ching-yung, Chairman of the Expert Committee on Food Safety, presented the certificates and took photos with CLG members.

~ Opinions on the Legislative Proposals ~

Regarding the legislative proposals, members were concerned about issues including standard setting, regulation of advertising, change of formulation and product certification. When formulating the legislative proposals, the CFS has adopted the Codex principles, taking into account the international practices. This will ensure that Hong Kong's legislative proposals are on par with the international standards. Such approach will strike a balance between the protection of health of infants and young children and the need to maintain stable supply of formula products and foods for them. At present, there is still lack of international consensus on the

regulation of nutritional claims. In view of the complexity and controversies concerning the regulation of claims, more time would be needed for consultation among stakeholders and public before a consensus can be reached. The CFS will therefore tackle the issue of regulating claims at a later stage.

As for product certification, the current legislations do not require the trade to certify their products. The trade has, however, an obligation to ensure that their products are in compliance with the legislations, such as making sure that the products are correctly labelled. The CFS will ensure the safety of food through its food surveillance programmes.

~ Responses ~

This activity has not only enabled us to understand consumer opinions on the legislative proposals, but also provided us a chance to reach out and understand public perception and expectations on food safety. A total of 46 evaluation questionnaires were collected after the activity. The feedback has been mostly positive. We will plan our work with reference to members' suggestions. Overall speaking, members' dedication and contributions are highly appreciated and the activity coincides with the missions and purposes of establishing CLG. Activity highlights have been uploaded onto the CFS website (<http://www.cfs.gov.hk>) for browsing.

~ Group Discussion Meeting ~

The CLG convened its first discussion meeting on the night of 22 January 2013 at the Communication Resource Unit to consult members on nutrition labelling in restaurants. The

main points of the discussion were as follows:

Provision of Nutrition Information in

Restaurants: CLG members said that healthy food options is a consideration when they choose a restaurant. They generally agreed that making nutrition information available for menu items would help the public make choices that are healthier and best suit their own health needs. Members considered that while providing nutrition information for some items might be difficult when the cooking process varies with different cooks, it is possible for restaurants to provide nutrition information for foods that have a standard manufacturing process, such as Chinese Dim Sum. Some members wished that chain restaurants, Chinese restaurants and tea restaurants would provide nutrition information for their food.

Content of Nutrition Information: Some members would like to see that restaurants provide “1+7” nutrition facts as required of prepackaged food products. They considered contents of energy, fat, sugar and sodium are more important information.

Ways of Providing Nutrition Information:

Members suggested that nutrition information could be displayed on entrance menu board and table menu, on the websites and through mobile applications.

~ Responses ~

The meeting revealed useful information related to consumer perceptions of providing nutrition information in restaurants. The CFS will bring these opinions to the attention of the trade and continue to explore this issue.