

Consumer Liaison Group Newsletter

1st Issue

~ A Summary of Certificate Presentation Ceremony cum Group Discussion Meeting ~

The Ceremony was successfully held on 4 December in a new format of having group discussion meeting concurrently this year. After a brief introduction of food safety control principles by Dr Teresa Choi of the Centre for Food Safety (CFS), participants were divided into 8 groups for discussion. Representatives of each group then reported their findings to all participants.

The Ceremony began at 3:15 pm. After making a speech to thank members of Consumer Liaison Group (CLG) for their contributions, Dr Constance Chan, Controller of the CFS, presented the certificates and took photos with them. Professor Kwan Hoi-shan, Chairman of the Expert Committee on Food Safety and Ms Clara Li, Head of Public Affairs Division of Consumer Council also graced their presence in the Ceremony.

~ Discussion Findings ~

The eight groups discussed public patterns and concerns for selecting prepackaged food, fresh food and food premises, their awareness of the work and relevant information of the CFS and suggestions in this respect. Key points are extracted below:

Among **prepackaged food**, biscuits, potato chips, instant noodles, canned food and dim sums were hot items. Some groups estimated that prepackaged food contributed to a third to half of their daily food intake. Expiry date and ingredient list on the package were information items of greatest concern, followed by place of origin, nutrient content, brand and product appearance. The work of CFS that impressed members most was on nutrition labelling, followed by messages on food additives and food allergens.

Some CLG members suggested strengthening publicity and education on food safety at district level by involving them to help promote messages to families and friends. Other recommendations included the use of publicity channels such as newspaper, radio and slogan as well as organisation of talks and visits.

Regarding **fresh food**, members claimed that they bought fresh meat, seafood, fruits and vegetables, eggs and herbs, etc in supermarkets or wet markets. During purchase, food safety and hygiene were their top concerns, while promotional stunts such as discount, free gifts and food tasting were most attractive. Some members tended to shop at supermarkets as they were usually cleaner and offered more products labelled with place of origin and production date. Some members recalled that CFS had advised on choosing freshwater crabs and making stir fried noodle with beef, and had recently issued e-news. There were also suggestions to promote food safety messages through training activities, TV programmes at prime time and desk calendar with friendly reminders.

For experience on patronising **food premises**, the frequency of dining out among members ranged from two to ten times per week depending on their work, whether they had family/social gathering, whether somebody could cook, etc. When choosing food premises, price and hygienic condition of food premises were their ultimate concerns. Other considerations included staff service attitudes, accessibility of shops and taste of food. Concerning the work of the CFS, nutrition labelling was most impressive. CFS's publications such as Food Safety

Bulletin, and messages including separating raw food and cooked food and the core temperature reaching 75°C were also cited. Other suggestions included organising visits related to food production and developing mobile apps etc.

~ Responses ~

This activity has enabled us to better understand consumer considerations and concerns for making food choices and their perception and expectations on food safety. A total of 101 evaluation questionnaires were collected after the activity. Majority of participants have provided concrete feedback and opinions and they are now under processing. Regarding the comments on unsatisfactory arrangements of the Ceremony, especially the refreshment, we will take note of these for any similar activities in the future. Overall speaking, members' dedication and contributions are highly appreciated and the activity has met the missions and purposes of establishing CLG. We will continue to send out details of CFS's and CLG's activities and the latest food safety information to members while planning our future work with reference to their suggestions. We hope that every member can become our partners to closely liaise with us and support our work. Activity highlights have been uploaded onto the CFS website (<http://www.cfs.gov.hk>) for browsing.

~ CLG New Moves ~

- ✧ The first quantitative survey and group discussion on nutrition labelling will be conducted in March and April 2011. Details will be provided later. Your active participation and support will be highly appreciated.
- ✧ To echo the government's Green Office Management principles and enhance communication efficiency, we will send e-news including food alerts, contents of publications, activity information and new/updated messages to CLG members through email on a bi-weekly basis.
- ✧ CLG newsletter covering relevant issues and new moves will be sent to all members.
- ✧ Members are encouraged to receive information via email to help reduce printing and mailing work. For change of means of contact or further enquiries, please call Ms Yuen at 2867 5149.