

Centre for Food Safety
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Notes of the Forty first Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum
held on 18 September 2013 at 2:30 p.m.
in Conference Room at Room 102, 1/F, New Wan Chai Market,
258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Present

Government Representatives

Dr. Y. Y. HO	Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment & Communication)	(Chairman)
Dr. Samuel YEUNG	Principal Medical Officer (Risk Assessment & Communication)	
Mr. Arthur YAU	Scientific Officer (Toxicology)	
Ms. Janny MA	Scientific Officer (Microbiology)	
Ms. Waiky WONG	Scientific Officer (Chemical)	
Mr. YANG Chi Ming	Chief Health Inspector (Food Safety Promotion)	
Ms. CHUNG Sau Wai	Superintendent (Risk Communication)	(Secretary)

Trade Representatives

Ms. May LAU	A&W Food Service Ltd.
Ms. Tobby LAI	Abbott Laboratories Limited
Ms. Pauline CHIU	Aji-No-Chinmi Co. (HK) Ltd.
Ms. CHEUNG Wai Shan	Aji-No-Chinmi Co. (HK) Ltd.
Mr. TO Tsz Wun	Aji-No-Chinmi Co. (HK) Ltd.
Ms. Caroline YUEN	American Consulate General Hong Kong Agricultural Trade Office
Ms. Christy CHEUNG	AS Watson Industries
Mr. CHAR Siu Lun	AS Watson Industries
Mr. Samuel LAM	Bureau Veritas Hong Kong Limited
Mr. TSANG Wah Him	Calbee Four Seas Co. Ltd
Mr. George WONG	Campbell Soup Asia Ltd.
Mr. Jacky LO	Castco Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Jase TSOI	Catalo Natural Health Foods Ltd.
Ms. LEE Yan Yin	China Dragon Inspection & Certification (HK) Ltd.

Mr. WONG Chi	China Dragon Inspection & Certification (HK) Ltd.
Ms. Samantha TSANG	China Resources Vanguard (HK) Co Ltd
Ms. LEUNG Wing Shan	City Super Ltd.
Ms. LUI Ping Yuk	City Super Ltd.
Ms. Elaine WONG	CMA Testing & Certification Laboratories
Ms. Patty YEUNG	CMA Testing & Certification Laboratories
Ms. Patience CHOI	CMA Testing & Certification Laboratories
Mr. Sixs YEUNG	Dah Chong Hong, Ltd.
Ms. Shally LEUNG	Dah Chong Hong, Ltd.
Ms. Jenny CHEUNG	Dah Chong Hong, Ltd.
Mr. TSANG Lok Wah	Dah Chong Hong, Ltd. - Food Mart.
Ms. Lina WONG	Dairy Farm
Ms. Kit Ying TSOI	Danone Baby Nutrition
Mr. Enders WONG	Eurofins Food Testing HK Ltd.
Ms. Karen CHIU	Eurofins Food Testing HK Ltd.
Mr. Freddy FONG	Foodscan Analytics Ltd
Ms. Amanda WONG	Glee Foods Industries Ltd.
Ms. Sally LEUNG	Godiva Chocolatier
Ms. Esther LAM	Gourmet House Limited
Ms. Ada WONG	Herbalife
Ms. Frenda WONG	HK Suppliers Association Ltd.
Mr. Allen WONG	Hong Kong Food Science and Technology Asso.
Ms. Joey LAU	Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre
Mr. Gray LO	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Mr. Takuro Mori	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Ms. Corine LIU	Hong Kong Yakult Co., Ltd.
Mr. WU Zheng Hong	Hongsenrun Industrial Holding Group Ltd.
Ms. WEI Xiao Yan	Hongsenrun Industrial Holding Group Ltd.
Ms. Peggy MAK	Hung Fook Tong Holdings Ltd
Mr. Marco LO	Institution of Dining Art
Ms. Maria LAI	International Food Safety Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Katherine LEUNG	International Food Safety Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. HO Tak Po	Kampery Development Limited
Mr. LEUNG Lok Man	Kee Wah Bakery Ltd.
Ms. CHEUNG So Chi	Kee Wah Bakery Ltd.
Ms. Kennie SIU	Kellogg Asia Marketing
Ms. Alice WONG	Lee Kum Kee International Holdings Ltd.
Mr. Jonathan SO	McDonald's Corporation
Mr. Ricky CHU	McDonald's Corporation

Ms. Amy CHU	Mead Johnson Nutrition
Mr. Joseph MA	Nestle Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. Eleanor CHAN	Nestle Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. Vien POON	New Zealand Products (Hong Kong) Limited
Mr. Karlus CHEN	New Zealand Products (Hong Kong) Limited
Mr. Nam HO	Nine to Five Limited
Mr. LAM Tsz Mau	Nissin Foods Co., Ltd.
Mr. Herbert LEE	Nissin Foods Co., Ltd.
Ms. German CHEUNG	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Ms. Yuki WONG	Pappagallo Pacific Ltd.
Ms. Cactus LAI	ParknShop (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Peter Johnston	ParknShop (HK) Ltd.
Mr. Patrick CHAN	PrizeMart Group of Companies
Mr. Herman MAK	PrizeMart Group of Companies
Ms. Stephanie SHUM	Saint Honore Cake Shop Ltd.
Ms. LEUNG Wai Yan	Satay King (Holdings) Co. Ltd.
Mr. LAU Ka Yin	Satay King (Holdings) Co. Ltd.
Ms. Carol LAI	SGS Consumer Testing Services
Mr. Tommy NG	Sino Group of Hotels
Ms. Jenny KIONG	Sun Yik Food Limited
Mr. Terry LAU	Sun Yik Food Limited
Mr. WONG Kam Chuen	Swire Coca-Cola HK Ltd.
Mr. Victor KOK	Tai Pan Bread & Cakes Co., Ltd.
Ms. May LO	The Dairy Farm Company Ltd. - Wellcome
Ms. Tess WONG	The Garden Co., Ltd.
Ms. Kammy YEUNG	The Hong Kong Standards and Testing Centre Ltd.
Ms. Wing CHEUNG	Unilever Hong Kong Ltd.
Ms. Sylvaine SIU	US Rice Federation and US Potato Board in Hong Kong
Mr. Sidney NG	Vital Production Ltd.
Mr. CHAN Chi Kong	Vitasoy Int'l Holdings Ltd.
Mr. Philip KWAN	Wrigley Asia Pacific
Mr. Tony CHOW	Wyeth (Hong Kong) Holding Co., Ltd.
Ms. Amy FU	Wyeth (Hong Kong) Holding Co., Ltd.

In Attendance

Mr. Henry TSOI	Assistant Secretary for Food & Health (Food)6/Food and Health Bureau
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Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed all trade representatives to the 41st meeting and introduced government representatives to the meeting.

Confirmation of the Notes of Last Meeting

2. The notes of last meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Matters Arising from Notes of Last Meeting

Food Product with False Description

3. Referring to paragraph 11 of the Notes of 40th Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum, Mr. YANG Chi Ming reported that the advice of Department of Justice (D of J) had been sought on whether there was an offence with the reported case of beef ball without beef composition. D of J advised that it was an offence under Trade Descriptions Ordinance (Cap. 362). The reported case would be referred to the Customs and Excise Department for follow up actions.

4. A trade representative sought advice on whether a food product containing a high proportion of buffalo meat could be called beef. He would share with Centre for Food Safety (CFS) the information on hand regarding the food product that contained mostly buffalo meat. The Chairman undertook to look into the issue upon receipt of the information.

Description of “Trace” on Nutrition Label

5. Referring to paragraph 26 of the Notes of 40th Meeting of the Trade Consultation Forum, Mr. YANG Chi Ming reported that the word “Trace” was considered to be a nutrition claim.

Agenda Item 1

The First Hong Kong Total Diet Study: Acrylamide

6. Ms. Waiky WONG briefed the meeting about the First Hong Kong Total Diet Study (TDS) on acrylamide and explained the formation of acrylamide in food and its effect on health. She introduced the methodology and findings of the TDS, the risk reduction efforts for acrylamide and the recommendations. It was recommended that trade should explore ways to reduce the level of acrylamide in food with reference to the trade guidelines during the selection of raw materials and the formulation of recipes and food processing conditions. To the public, it was recommended that a balanced and varied diet should be maintained with the consumption of at least three servings of vegetables a day and the consumption of fried foods such as potato chips and fried potatoes should be moderated. Besides, food should not be cooked for too long or at too high a temperature. She added that to reduce the level of exposure to acrylamide from vegetables, the public might consider blanching the vegetables before frying, or cooking them by boiling or steaming, and some vegetables might also be eaten raw after washing. The study findings had already been released in July 2013 whereas the study report and trade guidelines of the updated version had been uploaded to the CFS webpage. Other TDS reports would be released in phases and uploaded to the CFS webpage in due course.

7. In reply to enquiries of trade representatives, Ms. Waiky WONG said that there was no action level set for acrylamide in food while higher level of acrylamide would be formed

when food was cooked at too high a temperature or for too long. Indeed, a cooking temperature higher than 120°C would likely cause the formation of acrylamide but its formation may be affected by many factors such as the presence of asparagine and reducing sugars, and the cooking temperature and time.

8. A trade representative sought advice on whether the harmful effect of asparagine on health had been studied. Ms. Waiky WONG replied that asparagine itself was not harmful and the main concern was the formation of acrylamide by the reaction of asparagine and reducing sugars upon heating.

9. The Chairman suggested that trade should take reference to the trade guidelines for methods to reduce the formation of acrylamide.

Agenda Item 2

Amendment to the Microbiological Guidelines for Ready-to-eat Food

10. Ms. Janny MA briefed the meeting on the proposed amendment to the Microbiological Guidelines for Ready-to-eat Food (Guidelines) in Hong Kong. She advised that the proposed Guidelines would cover the microbiological criteria for ready-to-eat food in general and specific food items. The criteria for ready-to-eat food in general, including aerobic colony count (ACC), hygiene indicator organisms and specific foodborne pathogens, were mainly based on the current Guidelines and revised with reference to the “Guidelines for Assessing the Microbiological Safety of Ready-to-eat Foods Placed on the Market” published by the Health Protection Agency in the United Kingdom. The criteria for specific food items were mainly based on the current Supplementary Information to the Guidelines and the latest Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex) code of hygienic practices / standards. Specific

food items included bottled waters, edible ice, non-bottled drinks, powdered formulae for infants and young children, treated, ready-to-eat spices and live or raw bivalve molluscs intended for direct consumption. She added that the draft proposed Guidelines were discussed by the Expert Committee on Food Safety in September 2013. After finalising the amendments, the CFS would inform the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding the proposed Guidelines. A trade seminar would be organised to provide more in depth details on the Guidelines when they came into effect in 2014 tentatively.

11. A trade representative enquired whether the Guidelines were legally enforceable or they were simply for voluntary observance. Ms. Janny MA advised that enforcement actions might be considered if the microbiological quality of the concerned product was found to be unsatisfactory. The Chairman supplemented that the criteria stated in the Guidelines would be taken as a reference for law enforcement to ensure food safety.

12. The Chairman noted the suggestion from another trade representative to amend the Milk Regulation (Cap. 132AQ) as well as to prepare guidance on that aspect, especially on the method of heat treatment for milk and milk beverages stated in Schedule 1 of the regulation.

13. A trade representative sought advice on how to interpret the microbiological criteria stated in the Guidelines if a food was not able to be grouped under one of the food categories in the Guidelines. Ms. Janny MA advised that food categorisation was only needed for ACC assessment. The criteria for hygiene indicator organisms and specific foodborne pathogens applied to all ready-to-eat food in general i.e. all food categories. In addition, the food categorisation system for ACC assessment had been modified in the revised Guidelines and would be introduced to the trade in detail in the upcoming trade seminar. The Chairman supplemented that the food categorisation for ACC assessment should be taken into account

the raw ingredients used, and the nature and degree of processing before sale.

14. A trade representative enquired whether the criteria for yeasts and moulds would be included in the revised Guidelines. Ms. Janny MA advised that, according to Section 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132), all food for human consumption might be fit for its purposes, however, no limit for yeasts and moulds were stipulated in the Guidelines. Nevertheless, maximum levels for mycotoxin i.e. aflatoxin were stipulated in the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF). The Chairman supplemented that there was no international standard for yeasts and moulds in food. Currently, the CFS had adopted visual inspection to examine if there was out-growth of yeasts and moulds in food. When there was suspected yeasts and/or moulds in food, laboratory confirmation would be followed and enforcement action would be considered if yeasts and/or moulds were present.

15. In reply to the enquiry from a trade representative, the Chairman advised that there was no such food category as health food. The compliance of health food with the Guidelines should be examined on a case-by-case basis with reference to the composition of the health food and the dosage recommended for the health food.

16. A trade representative suggested that more traders, in particular those in the sector of food trade who might utilise the amended Guidelines the most, should be invited to the seminar prior to the implementation to ensure they were well briefed of the content. The Chairman noted the suggestion and advised that the seminar would be opened to all traders.

17. The Chairman summed up that, after finalising the amendments, the proposed Guidelines would be submitted to the WTO. The consultation period would normally last for 60 days. Thereafter, the finalised Guidelines would be printed and a trade seminar would be organised.

Agenda Item 3

Cadmium in Rice

18. Mr. Arthur YAU introduced to the meeting the situation of cadmium in rice and the background on this issue. He explained the nature of cadmium, and the sources and occurrence of cadmium in food. While dietary exposure was the main source of exposure to cadmium for the general population, it was very unlikely that there was acute toxicity of cadmium due to dietary exposure. On the other hand, prolonged intake of excessive cadmium might affect the kidney adversely. The International Agency for Research on Cancer of the World Health Organization considered that there was sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity with cadmium and cadmium compounds in humans due to occupational exposure through inhalation. However, available evidence did not suggest that cadmium had significant genotoxic and carcinogenic potential through oral intake. He added that risk assessment on dietary exposure to cadmium using the TDS methodology had been conducted. It indicated that the general population was unlikely to experience major undesirable health effects. Nevertheless, he advised trade to observe Good Agricultural Practice to minimise cadmium contamination in food crops, to obtain food supplies from reliable sources and to ensure foods imported or for sale were fit for human consumption and they complied with legal standards

19. A trade representative sought advice on what cadmium compounds were produced and whether cadmium or cadmium compounds were more poisonous. Mr. Arthur YAU advised that the concern was on cadmium itself. On law enforcement, it would base on the result of chemical analysis.

Agenda Item 4

Food Safety Advice on Eggs

20. Mr. YANG Chi Ming briefed the meeting on the background of the issue and advised that both the shell and the centre of an egg could be contaminated with pathogens, which might enter the egg from its shell through pores or cracks on the shell. They could also intrude into the egg from infected reproductive tissues of poultry before the formation of shell. He pointed out that eggs contaminated with pathogens might look normal. He advised that both trade and consumers should purchase eggs from reliable sources, observe the expiry date on the package / label of eggs and store eggs under refrigeration. As a general rule, it was not required to wash shell eggs. However, if eggs were soiled with faecal matter, they should be washed and consumed immediately. In addition, he advised that trade might choose pasteurised eggs or egg products, or dried egg powder to prepare dishes not requiring further heat treatment and should avoid using cracked eggs, which were more likely to be contaminated. To consumers, he advised that they should avoid eating raw or undercooked eggs and their products, particularly for the vulnerable groups such as the elderly, infants and young children, pregnant women and immuno-compromised people. If necessary, they should check with food premises whether the dish contained raw eggs.

21. The Chairman suggested that trade should pay attention to the matter.

Any Other Business

Guidelines on Food Adulterated with metal

22. A trade representative sought advice on whether there were guidelines to inform trade of the category of composite food for compliance with the legislation on Food Adulterated with

metal. The Chairman advised that the current legislation on Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) focused on the raw materials of food. For composite food, the general method adopted was calculation after taking ingredient composition into account.

Means of Communication

23. A trade representative suggested that, for more effective communication of food safety advice on acrylamide, eggs, etc. to the public, CFS should collaborate with Home Affairs Bureau and Radio Television Hong Kong to produce and broadcast television programme for conveying the advice to trade and the public.

Guidelines on Vocabulary for Food

24. A trade representative suggested that the production of guidelines on vocabulary for food should be considered with a view to providing information for informing consumers the quality of food. She noticed that similar vocabularies had been produced in many other countries. The Chairman welcomed a written proposal on the issue for consideration before taking the matter forward. He pointed out that trade would be involved in drawing up the guidelines as in other matters on food safety for collaborated efforts.

Guidelines on Nutrition Label

25. A trade representative suggested that the production of guidelines on nutrition label for displaying at food premises should be considered as he noted that there was a trend of rising awareness with consumers on the nutrient content of food they consumed at food premises. The Chairman was glad to hear the suggestion as it was the intention of Government to

promote nutrition label for displaying at food premises. He undertook to study the issue and would invite trade to workshops to share the findings of the study and exchange views on the matter.

Date of Next Meeting

26. Noting that Mid-Autumn Festival was on the day following immediately the date of meeting, the Chairman wished all a happy Mid-Autumn Festival.

27. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.