

Statistics on Code on Access to Information for fourth quarter of 2018

The Government received a total of 1 892 requests for information under the Code on Access to Information in the fourth quarter of 2018, a spokesman for the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau said today (June 28).

The total number of requests received since the introduction of the Code in March 1995 and up to the end of December 2018 amounted to 69 030. Of these, 4 105 requests were subsequently withdrawn by the requestors and 3 398 requests covered cases in which the bureaux/departments concerned did not hold the requested information or cannot confirm or deny the existence of information. As at December 31, 2018, 284 requests were still being processed by bureaux/departments.

Among the 61 243 requests which covered information held by bureaux/departments and which the bureaux/departments had responded to, 59 757 requests (97.6 per cent) were met, either in full (58 329 requests) or in part (1 428 requests), and 1 486 requests (2.4 per cent) were refused.

Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with the response of a bureau/department under the Code may request that the matter be reviewed. He or she may also lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman.

In the fourth quarter of 2018, the Ombudsman received 19 complaints relating to requests for information. In this quarter, the Ombudsman concluded 17 complaints, among which two were substantiated, two were partially substantiated, three were unsubstantiated, and 10 were settled after inquiries by the Ombudsman. As at December 31, 2018, the Ombudsman's investigations on 22 complaints were ongoing.

"The Code has provided an effective framework for the public to seek access to information held by the Government," the spokesman said.

Appointments to Education Commission announced

The Government today (June 28) announced the appointment of four members to the Education Commission (EC).

The newly appointed EC member is the Managing Partner, Greater China of McKinsey & Company, Mr Joseph Luc Ngai. Three incumbent members, Ms Nancy Ho Lan-sang, Professor Alvin Leung Seung-ming and Mr Wong Kam-leung, have been

re-appointed.

The four members have been appointed in their personal capacity for a two-year term, which will take effect on July 1, 2019.

An Education Bureau spokesman said, "Given their rich experience in the education and professional sectors, we are confident that the four members will provide valuable advice and contribute to the work of the EC."

The spokesman also thanked the outgoing member, Dr Odalia Wong Ming-hung, for her valuable contributions to the work of the EC.

The new EC membership list with effect from July 1, 2019, is as follows:
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Chairman

Mr Tim Lui Tim-leung

Ex-officio members

Permanent Secretary for Education, Mrs Ingrid Yeung Ho Poi-yan
Chairman, Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals, Dr Carrie Willis
Chairman, Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education, Professor Anthony Cheung Bing-leung
Chairman, Curriculum Development Council, Professor Tam Kar-yan
Chairman, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority Council, Dr Samuel Yung Wing-ki
Chairman, Quality Education Fund Steering Committee, Dr Gordon Tsui Luen-on
Chairman, Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, Mr Lester Garson Huang
Chairman, University Grants Committee, Mr Carlson Tong
Chairman, Vocational Training Council, Dr Roy Chung Chi-ping

Non-official members

Ms Kelly Chan Yuen-sau
Dr Fung Wai-wah
Ms Nancy Ho Lan-sang
Professor Alvin Leung Seung-ming
Mr Joseph Luc Ngai
Dr Halina Poon Suk-han
Ms Shum Siu-fong
Mr So Ping-fai
Mr Henry Tong Sau-chai
Mr Wong Kam-leung
Mr Dieter Yih Lai-tak

CFS announces food safety report for May

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (June 28) released the findings of its food safety report for last month. The results of about 14 000 food samples tested were satisfactory except for seven samples which were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 1 100 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, some 3 700 samples were taken for chemical tests and the remaining 9 200 (including about 8 800 taken from food imported from Japan) were collected to test radiation levels.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygienic indicators, while the chemical tests included pesticides, preservatives, metallic contaminants, colouring matters, veterinary drug residues and others.

The samples comprised about 3 400 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; 700 samples of cereals, grains and their products; 800 samples of meat and poultry and their products; 600 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; 1 700 samples of aquatic and related products; and 6 800 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The seven unsatisfactory samples comprised three fresh beef samples found to contain sulphur dioxide; a grass carp sample and a giant salamander sample found to contain traces of malachite green; a fruit sample detected with pesticide residue exceeding the legal limit and a soft ice-cream sample detected with coliform bacteria exceeding the legal limit.

The CFS has taken follow-up action on the unsatisfactory samples, including informing the vendors concerned of the test results, instructing them to stop selling the affected food items and tracing the sources of the food items in question.

Since the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap 132CM) came into effect on August 1, 2014, as of May 31 this year, the CFS has taken over 176 400 food samples at the import, wholesale and retail levels for testing for pesticide residues. The overall unsatisfactory rate is less than 0.2 per cent.

The spokesman added that excessive pesticide residues in food may arise from the trade not observing Good Agricultural Practice, e.g. using excessive pesticides and/or not allowing sufficient time for pesticides to decompose before harvesting. The maximum residue limits (MRLs) of pesticide residues in food set in the Regulation are not safety indicators. They are the maximum concentrations of pesticide residues to be permitted in a food commodity

under Good Agricultural Practice when applying pesticides. In this connection, consumption of food with pesticide residues higher than the MRLs will not necessarily lead to any adverse health effects.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food for sale is fit for human consumption and meets legal requirements. Consumers should patronise reliable shops when buying food and maintain a balanced diet to minimise food risks.

Temporary closure of some LCSD leisure and sports facilities

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) announced today (June 28) that the following leisure and sports facilities will be temporarily closed:

(a) The turf pitch at Tai Po Sports Ground in Tai Po District will be temporarily closed from July 1 to August 25 for turf maintenance works, while the running track will remain open. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Kwong Fuk Park Football Pitch or Kwong Fuk Football Ground in the same district.

(b) The turf pitch at Tuen Mun Tang Shiu Kin Sports Ground in Tuen Mun District will be temporarily closed from July 7 to August 31 for turf maintenance works, while the running track will remain open. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Siu Lun Sports Ground in the same district.

(c) The turf pitch at Fanling Recreation Ground in North District will be temporarily closed from July 30 to September 9 for turf maintenance works, while the running track will remain open. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Kwu Tung Grass Soccer Pitch or North District Sports Ground in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and sports facilities, the public may refer to the notices at the venues or contact venue staff directly.

CFS finds malachite green in samples of freshwater grouper and roast eel

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (June 27) announced that malachite green was found in a freshwater grouper sample and a prepackaged frozen roast eel sample. Follow-up is in progress.

Details of the roast eel sample are as follows:

Product name: Not available in English

Brand: Not available in English

Place of origin: China

Importer: Nisoon Frozen Food Hong Kong

Best-before date: February 27, 2021

A CFS spokesman said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned freshwater grouper sample from a stall in Po On Road Market, Cheung Sha Wan and the above-mentioned roast eel sample from a shop in Kwun Tong for testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test results showed that they contained malachite green at respective levels of 1.3 parts per billion (ppb) and 26.3 ppb.

"The CFS has informed the vendors concerned of the irregularities and instructed them to stop sale of the affected products. The importer of the roast eel product has also initiated a recall according to the CFS' instruction. Members of the public may call its hotline at 2850 7568 during office hours for enquiries about the recall," the spokesman added.

Malachite green is a type of industrial dye and has been used for treating infections in fish. Malachite green is possibly both genotoxic and carcinogenic. According to the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA), there is no safe level of residues of malachite green or its metabolites in food that represents an acceptable risk to consumers. Currently, malachite green has been prohibited for use in food producing animals in many countries. According to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap 132AF), no food sold in Hong Kong is allowed to contain malachite green. Offenders will be prosecuted and will be liable to a fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action, including tracing the sources of the affected products. Investigation is ongoing.