

CFS briefs industry representatives on Advance Release Arrangement for Hong Kong-manufactured food products entering Mainland market (with photos)

A spokesman for the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) stated today (May 7) that the new measure of the Cooperation Agreement on the Supervision of Safety and Facilitation of Customs Clearance of Food Products Manufactured in Hong Kong Exported to the Mainland will commence on May 21. Upon meeting specific requirements, Hong Kong-manufactured food products with satisfactory on-site inspection of the Mainland Customs that are still required to go through sampling and testing can be released upon completion of sampling without waiting for the results.

The Environment and Ecology Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) signed the Cooperation Agreement on November 27 last year. This agreement provides a facilitating arrangement for customs clearance for food products that meet relevant requirements, with the aim of shortening the time required for customs clearance, further enhancing the safety of local food products exported to the Mainland, facilitating trade, and promoting the development of the local food manufacturing industry. The CFS and the GACC have formulated the operational details of the Cooperation Agreement, such as the food testing requirements. The CFS will conduct special supervision on Hong Kong-manufactured food products exported to the Mainland to ensure compliance with relevant Mainland laws, regulations, and standards in food safety.

"The Cooperation Agreement will aid the monitoring of food safety from the source for Hong Kong-manufactured food products exported to the Mainland, thus achieving the goal of customs clearance facilitation. Not only will this promote food trade between the Mainland and Hong Kong, particularly in the Greater Bay Area, but it will also deepen exchanges and co-operation in food safety monitoring between the Mainland and Hong Kong, fully implementing the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The smooth implementation of the new measure, the Advance Release Arrangement, is the result of joint efforts between the Government and the trade. The CFS has arranged briefings on details of the new measure for the local food trade," the spokesman said.

The Advance Release Arrangement will initially cover three major categories of food, namely (1) beverages and frozen drinks (excluding alcoholic and dairy beverages); (2) biscuits, pastries and bread; and (3) candies and chocolates (including chocolate, cocoa butter substitute chocolate and their products). The arrangement will be available at the ports

under Shenzhen Customs and Gongbei Customs. According to the Census and Statistics Department, the export volume to the Mainland of relevant categories of domestic food products in 2023 was over 51.7 million kilograms with the value of approximately \$2.84 billion, which accounted for approximately 56 per cent of the total value of all Hong Kong-manufactured food exports to the Mainland in the same year and about 11 per cent of the total value of all domestic goods exported to the Mainland.

Under the new measure, a local food manufacturer who wishes to participate needs to apply with the CFS for the Advance Release Permission. After assessing the eligibility of the manufacturer, the CFS will grant an Advance Release Permission to the eligible food manufacturers. Relevant requirements include: the food manufacturer holds a valid food factory licence issued by the FEHD; food products must be manufactured in the food factory specified in the licence; a food safety management system with relevant certification (that is ISO 22000 or HACCP certification) is in place in the food factory concerned; the national standards and laws of Mainland China must be complied with. The food manufacturer should then apply with the CFS for a Health Certificate for Foods of Animal Origin or a Food Inspection Certificate for each consignment of food products exported to the Mainland. Furthermore, each consignment of food products must be accompanied by a Certificate of Hong Kong Origin – CEPA.

Details of the new measure, including the application form and relevant guidelines, have been uploaded to the CFS website (www.cfs.gov.hk). The CFS will continue to maintain close communication with the trade and provide appropriate support.

