

CFS to adjust import control measures on Japanese food from July 24

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (July 20) that with effect from noon on July 24, the import of vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk from four Japanese prefectures, namely Ibaraki, Tochigi, Chiba and Gunma, into Hong Kong are permitted with conditions while the import ban on the abovementioned products from Fukushima will remain in force. The relevant Food Safety Order issued by the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (DFEH) was published in the Gazette today.

According to the Order, each consignment of vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk from the four prefectures must be accompanied with radiation certificates issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Japan which will show the prefecture that the products come from and attest that the radiation levels of the products do not exceed the guideline levels of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (Codex). The exporter concerned must also hold and produce a valid exporter certificate issued by the MAFF to certify that those food products exported to Hong Kong are readily available for sale in Japan (i.e. the radiation levels of the food products comply with the Japanese levels which are more stringent than the Codex guideline levels) and are fit for human consumption as far as radiological protection is concerned.

A CFS spokesman said, "Ensuring food safety is the Government's prime consideration. Since March 24, 2011, the CFS has tested more than 490 000 samples of food products imported from Japan. The test results showed that none of the samples had radiation levels exceeding the Codex guideline levels. The Japanese authorities collected over 2 million food samples for radiation testing, with the vast majority complying with the Codex guideline levels. No samples of food products imported from Japan were detected to have any radiation levels by the CFS since September 2016.

"Moreover, international expert organisations have already confirmed the safety of Japanese food in terms of radiation levels, and more and more economies have lifted their import bans or restrictions on Japanese food totally or partially, with or without conditions."

The spokesman added that the measures listed in the Order are similar to the existing import requirements on game, meat, poultry, poultry eggs and aquatic products from the four prefectures, and are buttressed by the exporter certificate as an additional safeguard. The CFS will also continue to conduct radiation tests on every consignment of food products imported from Japan, and strengthen inspection and radiation testing on vegetables, fruits and milk products from the four prefectures.

"By adopting two levels of gatekeeping, i.e. the Japanese Government's gatekeeping work at the places of export and the CFS' gatekeeping work at the

import level, we can continue to safeguard food safety effectively. The CFS will enhance communication with the MAFF in respect of information and intelligence exchange, and maintain close communication with the trade on the related arrangements to ensure smooth operation," he stressed.

The CFS will continue to update the latest figures and test results on food products imported from Japan on its website (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/japan_nuclear_incidents.html) every working day for public inspection.

The DFEH issued an order on March 24, 2011, to prohibit the import of all vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk from five Japanese prefectures, namely Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Chiba and Gunma. All chilled or frozen game, meat and poultry and poultry eggs and all live, chilled or frozen aquatic products from the five prefectures must be accompanied by a certificate issued by the competent authority of Japan certifying that their radiation levels do not exceed the Codex guideline levels before they are imported to Hong Kong. Otherwise, the food products will be prohibited from import to Hong Kong.