

HKSAR Government strengthens food safety of food products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the inter-departmental taskforce comprising the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB), the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), the Department of Health and the Government Laboratory conducted a joint press conference today (August 23) to outline the arrangements and details of strengthening food safety of food products imported from Japan and the HKSAR Government's work in response to Japan's discharge of nuclear-contaminated water.

The Permanent Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Food), Miss Vivian Lau, indicated that, "The HKSAR Government strongly opposes the Japanese Government's plan to commence the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water on August 24." Food safety and public health are the primary concerns of the HKSAR Government. Hence, based on the precautionary principle, relevant departments have taken multiple counter-measures immediately.

The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene, Ms Irene Young, said, "As empowered by the law, I have issued Food Safety Order (the Order), which was gazetted today, to prohibit the import of aquatic products originating from ten metropolis/prefectures of Japan." According to the Order, all aquatic products originating from the ten metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki, Gunma, Miyagi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, are prohibited from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong if they are harvested, manufactured, processed or packed on or after August 24, 2023, including all live, frozen, chilled, dried or otherwise preserved aquatic products, sea salt, and unprocessed or processed seaweed.

For other aquatic products, sea salt, and unprocessed or processed seaweed from Japan that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the CFS will conduct comprehensive radiological tests to verify that the radiation levels of these products do not exceed the guideline levels before they are allowed to be supplied in the market.

Besides, Hong Kong will maintain the existing import control measures on certain food products from Japan. All vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk originating from Fukushima are banned from importing into Hong Kong while such foods originating from the four prefectures nearby Fukushima, i.e. Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki and Gunma, are allowed to be imported on the condition that they are accompanied with a radiation certificate and an exporter certificate issued by the Japanese authority. Chilled or frozen game, meat and poultry and poultry eggs originating from the above five

prefectures are allowed to be imported on the condition that they are accompanied with a radiation certificate issued by the Japanese authority which shows the radiation levels do not exceed the Codex guideline levels of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

The CFS will continue to perform its gatekeeping role at the import level, and work closely with Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department. In fact, the CFS has since mid-June expanded the scope of testing to cover all Japanese aquatic products and stepped up tests on related processed food imported from Japan. The CFS will continue enhancing the testing on imported Japanese food, and make reference to risk assessment results to adjust relevant surveillance work in a timely manner.

CFS held two sessions of online briefing for relevant sectors today to explain the details of the new measures so as to facilitate the trade's preparation and ensure a smooth operation.

AFCD and HKO will also enhance the tests on local catch and the environmental monitoring of the local waters.

With the view to enabling members of the public could have a better grasp of the latest safety information on imported Japanese food products, the EEB will make public announcements every working day regarding the radiological testing results of the imported food from Japan, as well as the results of environmental radiation monitoring in Hong Kong waters and radiological testing on local catch. The CFS, AFCD and HKO will announce relevant results on their respective websites.

In addition, the HKSAR Government will continue to maintain close contact with the Japanese food import trade and the catering sector, to communicate on the relevant control measures and latest situation.