

Hong Kong Customs mounts joint operation with FEHD during peak sales season for hairy crabs (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) have been carrying out joint operations since Monday (September 27) to inspect hairy crab retail outlets in various districts during the peak sales season for hairy crabs, with the aim of protecting consumer rights and upholding food safety by ensuring hairy crabs on sale in the market comply with regulations under the relevant laws.

During the inspections, Customs officers and FEHD officers monitored the sale of hairy crabs and also checked supportive documents for the place of origin and health certificates of the hairy crabs to ensure that the hairy crabs sold at retail shops are fit for human consumption and are in compliance with the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) and the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance.

Apart from carrying out inspections in the market, Customs officers also conducted detection and analysis through a big-data analytics system to identify online shops suspected of selling hairy crabs and verify whether they are in compliance with the TDO with a view to stepping up efforts to safeguard the interests of consumers making purchases online.

Up till present, officers of the two departments have inspected 80 hairy crab retail shops and no irregularity has been found so far. The relevant joint operations will continue.

Customs attaches great importance to the protection of consumer rights and will take appropriate enforcement action once activities in violation of the TDO are detected in the market. The department also reminds traders not to apply a false trade description to goods or services, or to supply or offer to supply goods or services to which a false trade description is applied. Those who violate the TDO are liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

The FEHD said that according to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, all food available for sale in Hong Kong, whether imported or locally produced, should be fit for human consumption. Also, any person who operates an unlicensed food business or sells restricted foods without permission is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Customs and the FEHD remind traders not to import or put on sale hairy crabs with an unknown origin and consumers should make purchases at reputable shops with the Shell Fish (Hairy Crab) Permit or relevant written permission granted by the FEHD.

Members of the public may make a report to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) if they suspect that hairy crabs with a falsely claimed place of origin have been bought.

In addition, if members of the public suspect that there are operators selling hairy crabs without the relevant permits/permissions or the hairy crabs are not accompanied with health certificates, they may make a report by calling the FEHD hotline at 2868 0000 or through email (enquiries@fehd.gov.hk).

