

Hong Kong Customs spares no effort to combat sea smuggling of frozen meat (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs has conducted a series of enforcement actions targeting frozen meat smuggling activities in Hong Kong's western waters since early this year, and has mounted a special operation codenamed "Minesweeping" from early May to present with a view to expand enforcement efforts. As at June 17 this year, a total of 23 sea smuggling cases of frozen meat have been detected, resulting in seizures of about 2 500 tonnes of suspected smuggled frozen meat, including beef, chicken feet and pork feet, with an estimated market value of about \$90 million. The seizure amount this year has surpassed the total amount recorded over the past 11 years.

Since early this year, Customs had discovered an upward trend of frozen meat smuggling activities from Hong Kong to the Mainland. Smugglers would first use barges to transport large batches of frozen meat to the western waters of Hong Kong. Then they would move the frozen meat from the barges to speedboats or fishing vessels by nightfall or late evening in order to smuggle the frozen meat into the Mainland.

Customs has detected 13 frozen meat smuggling cases from January to April this year and has made seizures of about 800 tonnes of suspected smuggled frozen meat with an estimated market value of about \$30 million. To expand the enforcement efforts, Customs has strengthened its deployment and launched the "Minesweeping" special operation in early May to further step up enforcement against frozen meat smuggling activities. During the special operation, a total of 10 cases have been detected so far and about 1 700 tonnes of suspected smuggled frozen meat with an estimated market value of about \$60 million has been seized. Both the seizure amount and market value have surpassed the total of the first four months by more than double.

Significant results have been achieved through Customs' operations against sea smuggling of frozen meat this year. The department stresses that it will keep up its enforcement action and will continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling of frozen meat by actively pursuing risk-management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times and maintaining close co-operation in its intelligence exchanges with local and overseas law enforcement agencies to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

