

LCQ22: Safety of food products from Quangang district of Quanzhou city

Following is a question by the Professor Hon Joseph Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (December 5):

Question:

It has been reported that Quangang district of Quanzhou city in Fujian Province is a base for aquaculture farming and edible salt production. On the 4th of last month, an incident occurred in Quangang district in which C9 aromatics (C9), a chemical feedstock, was leaked, affecting the coastal waters, aquaculture farms and salt farms there. Some experts have pointed out that humans are susceptible to poisoning and developing cancers by consuming C9-contaminated animals or plants. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows if there were imports of (i) marine produce from the aquaculture farms and (ii) edible salt from the salt farms, in Quangang district in the past three years; if there were, whether the Government has banned the imports of such food products upon the occurrence of the aforesaid incident; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) as some vegetable importers and wholesalers have indicated that there were imports of vegetables grown in Fujian Province in recent years, whether the Government knows if the water sources and farmland there were contaminated in the aforesaid incident; if they were contaminated, whether it will immediately impose a ban on the imports of the agricultural products therefrom; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the various parts of the question, our reply is as follows:

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department has been closely monitoring the situation regarding the chemical leakage incident in Quangang District of Quanzhou City in Fujian Province which reportedly occurred last month, with a view to assessing whether the incident will affect the safety of food supplied to Hong Kong.

According to the administrative arrangements between the Mainland authorities and the CFS, only registered farms approved by the Mainland authorities can export agricultural products to Hong Kong. In the past three years, there were no registered aquaculture farms and vegetable farms in Quanzhou City (including Quangang District) approved by the Mainland

authorities and therefore no aquatic products or vegetables were supplied to Hong Kong from that region. Besides, there has been no import of salt into Hong Kong from Quanzhou City since the incident.

The CFS will continue to keep in view the development of the aforementioned incident and monitor the safety of food imported from that region and the surrounding areas on a risk-based principle.