

## SFH visits Beijing to discuss food safety and supply of agricultural food to Hong Kong (with photos)

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, today (October 29) met with officials from the General Administration of Customs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council and the Ministry of Commerce during her visit in Beijing, with a view to fostering closer ties and enhancing exchanges with the relevant Mainland authorities in respect of matters relating to food safety and the supply of agricultural food to Hong Kong.

Professor Chan met with the Minister of the General Administration of Customs, Mr Ni Yuefeng, and the Vice Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Mr Yu Kangzhen, this morning and took the opportunity to learn about the latest situation of the outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) on the Mainland.

Professor Chan said, "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is very concerned with, and is paying close attention to, the outbreak of ASF on the Mainland, and has been maintaining close liaisons with the General Administration of Customs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs on the development and response actions. So far, no pig farm registered for supplying Hong Kong is affected and the supply of live pigs from the Mainland remains generally stable. I express my heartfelt gratitude to the General Administration of Customs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs for their efforts over the past two months or so in the management and control work at source, as well as their efforts in ensuring steady supply of live pigs to Hong Kong. In particular, the announcement of a package of measures in quarantine and control in transporting live pigs to Hong Kong last week can ensure that live pigs for supply to Hong Kong undergo strict quarantine and control by the Customs authorities."

She added, "Although there is no food safety issue connected with ASF, the HKSAR Government has already stepped up bio-security measures in various areas, including pig farms, slaughterhouses and boundary checkpoints, to prevent infection to local pig farms. Among them, cleaning and disinfection of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving slaughterhouses and pig farms have been enhanced, and use of swill of animal origin as pig feed is being phased out."

In addition, Professor Chan told Mr Yu, "The HKSAR Government has been actively promoting the sustainable development of the fisheries industry in recent years, consistent with the direction of development on the Mainland. We believe that the option for HKSAR fishermen to develop aquaculture business in Mainland waters is worth exploring."

Aside from the outbreak of ASF, Professor Chan and Mr Ni also discussed other issues relating to food safety and supply. She also signed a protocol with the Director General of the General Office of the General Administration of Customs, Mr Zhang Guangzhi, on the importation of bird's nest products into the Mainland.

Professor Chan remarked, "The formal signing of the protocol on implementation of inspection and quarantine arrangements for imported bird's nest products from Hong Kong will help foster the trading of bird's nests between the Mainland and the HKSAR, and will also be welcomed by the trade of the two places. On behalf of the HKSAR Government, I thank the General Administration of Customs for its great support on this issue.

"In addition, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department and the General Administration of Customs will continue to work on the regulatory scheme on the carriage by travellers, as well as postage, of bird's nest products into the Mainland."

In the afternoon, Professor Chan paid a courtesy call to the Deputy Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Song Zhe, and the Assistant Minister of Commerce, Mr Ren Hongbin. Professor Chan told Mr Song that the Central People's Government and the SARG had attached great importance to the development of the Greater Bay Area, under the framework of which the Mainland and the HKSAR had been stepping up co-operation in all aspects.

During the meeting with the officials of the Ministry of Commerce, both sides exchanged views on food supply to Hong Kong, particularly on safeguarding the stable supply, quality and safety of agricultural products. They also agreed to maintain close co-operation on these issues.

Those accompanying Professor Chan on the visit included the Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food), Mr Philip Yung; the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation, Dr Leung Siu-fai; the Controller of the Centre for Food Safety, Dr Ho Yuk-yin; and the Assistant Commissioner of Customs and Excise (Boundary and Ports), Ms Louise Ho. Professor Chan departed for Hong Kong after her Beijing visit this evening.

