

Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

In response to the Japanese Government's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene issued a Food Safety Order which prohibits all aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Miyagi, Chiba, Gunma, Tochigi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong.

For other Japanese aquatic products, sea salt and seaweeds that are not prohibited from being imported into Hong Kong, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department 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.

As the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water is unprecedented and will continue for 30 years or more, the Government will closely monitor and step up the testing arrangements. Should anomalies be detected, the Government does not preclude further tightening the scope of the import ban.

From noon on February 5 to noon today (February 6), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 170 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category, in the past three days (including last Saturday and Sunday). No sample was found to have exceeded the safety limit. Details can be found on the CFS's thematic website titled "Control Measures on Foods Imported from Japan"

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/programme_rafs_fc_01_30_Nuclear_Event_and_Food_Safety.html).

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has also tested 50 samples of local catch for radiological levels. All the samples passed the tests. Details can be found on the AFCD's website

(www.afcd.gov.hk/english/fisheries/Radiological_testing/Radiological_Test.html).

The Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) has also enhanced the environmental monitoring of the local waters. No anomaly has been detected so far. For details, please refer to the HKO's website

(www.hko.gov.hk/en/radiation/monitoring/seawater.html).

From August 24 to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 29 329 samples of food imported from Japan (including 19 663 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 8 270 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed

the tests.

CFS announces food safety report for December 2023 and summary of food surveillance programme for 2023

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (February 6) released the findings of its food safety report for December 2023. The results of about 6 300 food samples tested were found to be satisfactory except for nine unsatisfactory samples which were announced earlier. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.9 per cent.

A CFS spokesman said about 800 food samples were collected for microbiological tests, and about 5 500 samples were taken for chemical and radiation level tests.

The microbiological tests covered pathogens and hygiene indicators; the chemical tests included testing for pesticides, preservatives, metallic contaminants, colouring matters, veterinary drug residues and others; and the radiation level tests included testing for radioactive caesium and iodine in samples collected from imported food from different regions.

The samples comprised about 2 800 samples of vegetables and fruit and their products; about 300 samples of cereals, grains and their products; about 600 samples of meat and poultry and their products; about 900 samples of milk, milk products and frozen confections; about 700 samples of aquatic and related products; and about 1 000 samples of other food commodities (including beverages, bakery products and snacks).

The nine unsatisfactory samples comprised a date sample and a candied lotus seed sample detected with sulphur dioxide at a level exceeding the legal limit; a prepackaged red date sample detected with sulphur dioxide at a level exceeding the legal limit and in breach of the food labelling regulations; a prepackaged date sample and a prepackaged fresh bean curd sticks sample in breach of the food labelling regulations; a fresh pork liver sample detected with a veterinary drug residue at a level exceeding the legal limit; a fresh beef sample found to contain sulphur dioxide; a Chinese green radish sample detected with a pesticide residue at a level exceeding the legal limit; and a prepackaged ice-cream sample not in compliance with the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations.

The CFS has taken follow-up actions on the above-mentioned unsatisfactory samples including informing the vendors concerned of the test results, instructing them to stop selling the affected food items and tracing

the sources of the food items in question.

The spokesman reminded the food trade to ensure that food is fit for human consumption and meets legal requirements. Consumers should patronise reliable shops when buying food and maintain a balanced diet to minimise food risks.

Separately, as the Japanese Government has commenced the discharge of nuclear-contaminated water at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Station, the CFS will continue enhancing the testing on imported Japanese food, and make reference to the risk assessment results to adjust relevant surveillance work in a timely manner. The CSF will announce every working day on its dedicated webpage

(www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_rafs/daily_japan_nuclear_incident_s.html) the radiological test results of the samples of food imported from Japan, with a view to enabling the trade and members of the public to have a better grasp of the latest safety information.

Summary of food surveillance programme for 2023

Concluding the food surveillance programme for 2023, the spokesman said that apart from routine food surveillance, the CFS also conducted a number of targeted, seasonal and popular food surveillance projects.

"About 65 000 samples were tested by the CFS last year. The overall satisfactory rate was 99.8 per cent, which was comparable to the results in recent years. This indicates that food safety has been maintained at a high standard in Hong Kong," he said.

"The exceedances or breaches for most of the unsatisfactory samples were not serious and would not pose adverse health effects to the general public. For individual food items with unsatisfactory test results, the CFS has taken prompt and effective risk management actions to safeguard public health," he said.

He added that in planning the food surveillance programme, the CFS will take into consideration a number of factors such as the food consumption level and the risk of the food concerned in deciding on the number of samples to be tested and the frequency of sampling as well as the testing parameters. In addition, the CFS will also suitably adjust its food surveillance programme and strengthen relevant testing with regard to local and overseas food incidents as well as past surveillance data, in particular breaches of regulatory requirements that occurred more frequently, so as to safeguard food safety in Hong Kong.

Centre for Food Safety announces test results of Lunar New Year food (second phase)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (February 6) announced the test results of a recently completed seasonal food surveillance project on Lunar New Year (LNY) food (second phase). The test results of around 180 samples collected were satisfactory except for one sample that was announced earlier.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS has conducted this seasonal food surveillance project in two phases and the first-phase test results were announced last month. With the LNY around the corner, the CFS has completed the second phase of the surveillance project on LNY food. Steamed puddings (e.g. turnip puddings and festive cakes), fried dumplings (e.g. sesame balls and crispy triangles), candies, glutinous rice balls, nuts, pistachio nuts, melon seeds and dried aquatic products were collected from different retailers (including online retailers) for chemical analysis. Chemical tests targeted preservatives, colouring matters, antioxidants, veterinary drug residue, etc."

The unsatisfactory food sample was a candied lotus seed sample detected with sulphur dioxide at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS has taken follow-up action on the above-mentioned unsatisfactory sample including informing the vendor concerned of the test result, instructing them to stop selling the affected food item, and tracing the source of the food item in question.

The spokesman urged the food trade to comply with the relevant laws and regulations in the preparation of food and production of labels. They should follow Good Manufacturing Practice and use permitted food additives only in an appropriate manner. Retailers should source food from reliable suppliers, and conduct quality checks of incoming materials and end products to ensure that ingredients used are within legal standards. In addition, the food trade should maintain proper records in accordance with the requirements of the Food Safety Ordinance to allow source tracing if needed.

The spokesman also advised consumers to buy LNY food from reliable retailers with good hygiene conditions; make sure the packaging of prepackaged cakes and snacks is intact and the products have not expired; refer to the nutrition labels on the sugar, salt (sodium) and fat content, etc, for making healthy choices; and pay attention to the hygiene conditions of food containers and the personal hygiene of staff when buying loose-packed food (e.g. candied lotus seeds, nuts and melon seeds).

"Consumers should choose food products with natural colours. Bright white pistachios may have been bleached and melon seeds with unnatural gloss may have had mineral oil added. Consumption of these food products can cause

gastrointestinal discomfort," the spokesman said.

"Festive cakes that are not for immediate consumption should be kept refrigerated or stored according to the instructions on the package, and should be eaten before they expire. Reheat hot-served food thoroughly before consumption, consume it as soon as possible and avoid prolonged exposure of the food at room temperature. Nuts and melon seeds should not be kept for a long time, and those with mould or an abnormal smell or taste should not be eaten," he added.

The spokesman reminded members of the public to maintain a balanced diet and avoid excessive consumption of LNY food that is high in energy, sugar, salt or fat.

Please visit the CFS website (www.cfs.gov.hk/seasonalfood) for more food safety information about seasonal food.

Suspicious website related to Mox Bank Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by Mox Bank Limited relating to a suspicious website, which has been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

Cross-boundary passenger traffic estimation and arrangements for Lunar New Year festive period

The Immigration Department (ImmD) estimates that over 7.5 million passengers (including Hong Kong residents and visitors) will pass through Hong Kong's sea, land and air control points during the upcoming Lunar New Year festive period (from February 9 to 17). The ImmD, in consultation with the Shenzhen General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection, estimates that around 6 million passengers will pass through land boundary control points. The number of outbound passengers and inbound passengers using land boundary control points will be relatively higher on February 11 (Sunday) and February 13 (Tuesday), with around 461 000 passengers and 607 000 passengers respectively.

The ImmD estimates that the passenger traffic at Lo Wu Control Point, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Control Point will be heavy, with a daily average forecast of about 170 000, 158 000 and 105 000 passengers respectively.

To facilitate diversion of cross-boundary passenger and vehicular movements during the Lunar New Year holidays, a consensus was reached by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government with the relevant departments of Guangdong Province and Shenzhen Municipality to make the following special arrangements:

(1) Passenger and passenger vehicle clearance services at the Shenzhen Bay Control Point, which usually close at midnight, will operate overnight, providing round-the-clock services, from February 9 to 13; and

(2) Passenger clearance service at the Lo Wu Control Point, which usually closes at midnight, will be extended on February 9 and 11 to 2am the next day.

With the extension of operating hours at certain land boundary control points, and to cope with the anticipated heavy traffic during the festive period, the ImmD has minimised leave for frontline officers for flexible deployment and operation of extra clearance counters and kiosks. Additional security guards will also be deployed to provide crowd management support.

Furthermore, the ImmD, the Police, the Customs and Excise Department and the MTR Corporation Limited will set up a joint command centre at Lo Wu Control Point to make necessary arrangements. The ImmD will also establish close communication with the Mainland authorities, such as the Shenzhen General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection. To ensure smooth passenger traffic flow, passenger conditions will be closely monitored and appropriate traffic diversion plans will be adopted when necessary.

To avoid congestion and a longer than usual waiting time for immigration clearance, the ImmD advises all land boundary passengers to plan in advance, avoid making their journeys during busy periods and keep track of radio and TV broadcasts on traffic conditions at various control points. The expected busy times at boundary control points are available on the website of the ImmD at www.immd.gov.hk. Furthermore, passengers may also check the estimated waiting times at each land boundary control point at any time or place via the Immigration Mobile Application (ImmD Mobile App). They can then plan their trips effectively and save time queuing at control points. The ImmD Mobile App can be downloaded free of charge from the Apple App Store (supports iOS version 11.0 or above), Google Play (supports Android version 8.0 or above), Huawei AppGallery (supports Android version 8.0 or above) and the APK file available on the ImmD website. Passengers can download the ImmD Mobile App by scanning the QR code (see Annex) or via the ImmD website, www.immd.gov.hk. In addition, information on public transport services to and from various control points is available on the Transport Department website at www.td.gov.hk.

For travellers making journeys to the Mainland, the ImmD reminds them to carry their proof of identity and valid travel documents for crossing the boundary. Hong Kong residents should also check the validity of their Home Visit Permits. Non-permanent residents must carry their valid smart identity card as well as their Document of Identity for Visa Purposes or valid travel document.

Holders of the acknowledgement receipt issued due to reported loss or replacement of their Hong Kong identity cards, or children under 11 years old who hold Hong Kong identity cards, should carry a valid travel document or Re-entry Permit.

About 700 e-Channels have been installed at various control points. Hong Kong residents enrolled for the Express e-Channel should re-enrol if they have been issued with a new identity card. Furthermore, the Contactless e-Channel service is available at all control points now. All eligible Hong Kong residents, after enrolment, can generate an encrypted QR code through the Contactless e-Channel mobile application to enter the e-Channel, and then verify their identity with the facial verification technology for automated immigration clearance.

In addition, all control points have introduced self-service departures for visitors to Hong Kong (Smart Departure) which provides greater travel convenience for visitors. The service employs facial recognition technology for identity verification, which allows eligible visitors holding electronic travel documents to perform self-service departure clearance through Smart Departure e-Channels without prior enrolment.

Hong Kong residents who require assistance while travelling outside Hong Kong may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the ImmD at (852) 1868.