

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 January 8 to noon today (January 9), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 135 food samples imported from Japan, which were of the "aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt" category. 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).

In parallel, 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 24 143 samples of food imported from Japan (including 16 032 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 6 866 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

Postal services to Thailand return to normal

â€‹Hongkong Post announced today (January 9) that, as advised by the postal administration of Thailand, mail delivery services previously impacted by flooding have returned to normal.

Hong Kong signs first protocol to amend ASEAN – Hong Kong, China free trade agreement

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, signed today (January 9) the First Protocol to Amend the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Hong Kong (the Protocol), to update the Product Specific Rules (PSR) of origin under the FTA, enhancing the coverage of the PSR from more than 200 categories of products to almost 600, thereby enabling Hong Kong businesses to more easily and effectively gain Hong Kong-originating status for an increased number of specified products, and thus enjoy preferential tariff treatment when expanding into the growing ASEAN market.

The specified products incorporated into the FTA through the Protocol include various categories of products of interest to Hong Kong traders and manufacturers, such as jewellery, medicaments, food products and textile products. The signing of the Protocol will help enhance the competitiveness of the products concerned and trade flows, creating more business opportunities for Hong Kong businesses in the ASEAN market.

"ASEAN is Hong Kong's second-largest trading partner in merchandise trade with a total trade volume of around \$1,294 billion in 2022, representing a growth of over 38 per cent since the signing of the FTA in 2017. Our burgeoning trade has been uplifted by the FTA, signifying the latter's importance in consolidating our position as an international trade centre," Mr Yau said.

"I have full confidence that the implementation of the Protocol will further drive growth in our economic and trade relations with the ASEAN member states. As a staunch proponent of free trade, Hong Kong, joining hands with our trading partners, will continue to strive for further liberalisation

of trade in the region," he added.

The text of the Protocol will be uploaded onto the Trade and Industry Department's website (www.tid.gov.hk/english/ita/fta/hkasean/index.html) after all parties have completed their signing. Hong Kong and ASEAN will continue to work closely to bring about the early implementation of the Protocol, so that Hong Kong exporters may reap the benefits as soon as possible.

[Caritas Institute of Higher Education acquires university title](#)

Subsequent to the approval by the Chief Executive-in-Council today (January 9), the Permanent Secretary for Education has approved the change of the English and Chinese names of the Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE) to "Saint Francis University" and "聖法蘭西大學," respectively in accordance with the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) (the Ordinance).

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, congratulated the institution. She said, "The granting of a university title not only represents a milestone for the CIHE but also bears testimony to the Government's commitment to promoting the parallel development of the publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors to provide young people in Hong Kong with quality, flexible and diversified study pathways. I trust that the self-financing post-secondary sector would continue to play a pivotal role in nurturing talent to support Hong Kong's manpower needs and its further development into an international hub for post-secondary education."

The CIHE is the fourth self-financing post-secondary education institution granted a university title. In line with the revised roadmap for post-secondary colleges to become private universities as published in 2015, the Government has taken relevant factors into account before granting a university title to the CIHE, including its breadth of programmes; research capability; size and scale; as well as governance and management, financial sustainability, academic environment and quality assurance.

To assess its readiness for becoming a private university, the CIHE invited the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to undertake an Institutional Review in 2022. The HKCAAVQ concluded that the CIHE met the standards expected of a private university.

Founded in 1985 as the Caritas Francis Hsu College, the institution became an approved post-secondary college in 2001 to operate sub-degree

programmes. After acquiring an accreditation status for offering degree-level programmes in 2010, it changed its name to the CIHE in 2011. In the 2023/24 academic year, the CIHE operates 13 self-financing locally accredited post-secondary programmes, comprising 12 bachelor's degree programmes and one master's degree programme, with about 3 000 full-time and 500 part-time students in total.

The CIHE has attained Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status in the areas of General Business Administration, Social Work, and Information and Communication Technology. The PAA status obtained will continue to be subject to periodic institutional reviews by the HKCAAVQ. Having acquired a university title, the CIHE will be required to submit a progress report together with an audited financial report to the Education Bureau annually to ensure its teaching quality and financial sustainability. The Education Bureau has commissioned the HKCAAVQ to review the reports and provide independent expert advice to the Bureau.

[Import of poultry meat and products from areas in Korea suspended](#)

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (January 9) that in view of notifications from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 and H5N6 avian influenza in Jangheung-gun and Boseong-gun of Jeollanam-do Province respectively in Korea, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the above-mentioned areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 50 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat and about 23.85 million poultry eggs from Korea in the first nine months of last year.

"The CFS has contacted the Korean authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.