

# Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, October 20, 2023 is 106.7 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

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## CFS investigates suspected cases of breaching Food Safety Order on aquatic product and fruit imported from Japan

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (October 20) that an aquatic product and fruit from regulated Japanese prefectures were found suspected to be in breach of the relevant Food Safety Order when the CFS inspected food imported from Japan. The products concerned have been marked and sealed by the CFS and have not entered the market. The CFS is following up on the case.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "During inspections of the food labels of the concerned consignments of food imported from Japan, the CFS found a pack of chilled scallops that was manufactured, processed and packed in Miyagi Prefecture after the Order was issued and a pack of figs from Chiba Prefecture that was not accompanied with a radiation certificate and exporter certificate, and the importer concerned is thus suspected of breaching the relevant Order."

According to the Order, all aquatic products originating from the 10 metropolis/prefectures, namely Tokyo, Fukushima, Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki, Gunma, Miyagi, Niigata, Nagano and Saitama, are prohibited from being imported into and supplied in Hong Kong if they are harvested, manufactured, processed or packed on or after August 24, 2023, including all live, frozen, chilled, dried or otherwise preserved aquatic products, sea salt, and unprocessed or processed seaweed. In addition, all vegetables, fruits, milk, milk beverages and dried milk originating from Fukushima are banned from importing into Hong Kong while such foods originating from Chiba, Tochigi, Ibaraki and Gunma prefectures are allowed to be imported on the condition that they are accompanied with a radiation certificate and an exporter certificate issued by the Japanese authority certifying that the radiation levels do not exceed the guideline levels and are fit for human consumption.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incidents and take appropriate action, including informing the Japanese authorities concerned of the incidents. Prosecution will be instituted against the importer concerned should there be sufficient evidence. The investigation is ongoing.

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## Inspection of aquatic products imported from Japan

â€œIn 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 October 19 to noon today (October 20), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 156 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](http://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](http://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](http://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 9 666 samples of food imported from Japan (including 6 325 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea

salt) and 2 806 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

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## Coin Collection Programme

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (October 20) announced a new service schedule of the two Coin Carts under the Coin Collection Programme, for the period of November 6, 2023 up to January 14, 2024. The schedule and other details of the Programme are shown on the HKMA webpage ([coincollection.hkma.gov.hk](http://coincollection.hkma.gov.hk)).

Since the launch of the Programme in October 2014 up to September 30, 2023, the two Coin Carts had carried out 1,127,000 transactions, collecting 889 million coins with a total face value of HK\$1,393 million during the period. The collected coins are re-circulated to meet demand.

The Coin Carts provide service at locations that are convenient to the public without affecting the normal flow of traffic and pedestrians. Locations that have suitable power supply facilities, such as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department mobile library service locations, are preferred so as to reduce the need for using the Coin Carts' own stand-by generators. This makes the Programme more environmentally friendly. In selecting the service locations, the HKMA has taken into consideration comments and suggestions given by district councils and members of public, and has consulted the Transport Department and the Hong Kong Police Force as necessary.

The two Coin Carts collect coins from members of public in the 18 districts of Hong Kong on a rotating basis. Under normal circumstances, each Coin Cart will stay at a location for a week, subject to availability of the parking space and the maintenance schedule of the Cart. Service hours are from 10am to 7pm. Each vehicle is equipped with two coin counting machines and operational staff will be present to provide assistance. An electrical wheelchair lift is available for use. Users can choose to exchange coins for banknotes or adding value to their stored value facilities, such as Octopus Cards or e-wallets (including AlipayHK, Octopus Wallet, Tap&Go, TNG Wallet and WeChat Pay). There is also a Community Chest donation box inside each vehicle. The coin collection service is free of charge.

The HKMA will review the Programme from time to time, and will regularly update the service schedule to give advance notice to the public.

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## [HKMA signs MoUs with five local universities to foster collaboration on CBDC research \(with photo\)](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) today (October 20) established the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) Expert Group and signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with five local universities whose faculty members are participants of the group.

The CBDC Expert Group brings together experts from a range of disciplines, including business, computer science, economics, finance, and law, which are relevant to the HKMA's research work on CBDC. Through the establishment of the CBDC Expert Group, the HKMA seeks to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange on CBDC research with the academia. Under the MoUs, the group will support the HKMA's exploration of key policy and technical issues surrounding CBDC, and offer advices, training sessions, and workshops pertaining to CBDC and related fintech topics to the HKMA.

The five relevant local universities are: the Chinese University of Hong Kong, City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and the University of Hong Kong. Membership of the CBDC Expert Group is on an individual basis (please refer to the [HKMA website](#) for the CBDC Expert Group member list). In addition to local universities, the HKMA will also consider inviting academics from overseas universities to join the group at a later stage.

The group has already commenced work on two research papers. The first paper is about privacy issues pertaining to CBDC. It will examine the efficacy of different types of privacy-enhancing technologies. The second paper will discuss the interoperability of CBDCs, and examine the viability of blockchain technologies and related standards in facilitating compatibility between different CBDC implementations.

The Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Howard Lee, said, "The HKMA has been actively fostering government-industry-academia collaboration in CBDC research. We are pleased to join forces with leading academic experts as part of our exploration of key policy and technical issues surrounding wholesale and retail CBDCs. The CBDC Expert Group will serve as a crucial component in reinforcing Hong Kong's forefront position in CBDC research."

