

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 November 25 to noon today (November 26), the CFS conducted tests on the radiological levels of 139 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, 2023, to noon today, the CFS and the AFCD have conducted tests on the radiological levels of 102 106 samples of food imported from Japan (including 65 630 samples of aquatic and related products, seaweeds and sea salt) and 22 914 samples of local catch respectively. All the samples passed the tests.

CHP announces local HIV/AIDS situation in third quarter 2024 (with photo)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced today (November 26) that a total of 85 new cases of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and 22 new cases of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) were reported in the third quarter of 2024 in Hong Kong. The prevalence of HIV infection among the general public in Hong Kong remained at 0.1 per cent, well below the global average. The number of new cases has decreased since the peak in 2015 and there were fewer than 90 new cases for two consecutive quarters, demonstrating the effectiveness of AIDS control and prevention in Hong Kong. The CHP urges people with a history of unsafe sex to undergo early HIV testing to keep track of their health status, and those infected persons to receive treatment as early as possible in order to suppress the virus.

"The 85 new HIV cases involve 72 males and 13 females, with ages ranging from 18 to 75. Among the cases with a reported route of transmission, 65 cases (97 per cent) acquired the infection via sexual contact, including 44 who acquired the infection via homosexual or bisexual contact and 21 via heterosexual contact. The cases were mainly reported by three sources: public hospitals, clinics and laboratories (41 cases); the DH's Social Hygiene Clinics (14 cases); and private hospitals, clinics and laboratories (14 cases). The cumulative total of HIV infections reported locally since 1984 is 12 308," said Dr Bonnie Wong, the Consultant (Special Preventive Programme) of the Public Health Services Branch of the CHP.

"Among the new AIDS cases, which included 20 males and two females, 18 (81.8 per cent) were diagnosed with HIV infection at the time of progression to AIDS, and the most common AIDS-defining illness remained Pneumocystis pneumonia. Since 1985, a cumulative total of 2 545 confirmed AIDS cases have been reported in Hong Kong," Dr Wong said.

She stressed that, although the number of new cases has dropped, the proportion of late presenters among newly reported cases in Hong Kong has increased from 28.5 per cent in 2014 to 47 per cent in 2023, and required more attention.

Late presenters refer to individuals with a very low CD4 cells count (less than 200 cells/mm³) at the time of HIV diagnosis. Late presentation indicates that these individuals were not diagnosed and put on treatment in a timely manner at an earlier stage of infection, resulting in a weakened immune system as the virus attacks CD4 cells. Late presentation can lead to an increased risk of opportunistic infections and malignancies, leading to a higher mortality rate. In addition, as a result of an unsuppressed viral load, late presenters contribute to an increased risk of HIV transmission in

the community.

Having taken into consideration the latest local epidemiology, scientific evidence, recommendations from the World Health Organization and overseas practices, the Scientific Committee on AIDS and STI (Sexually Transmitted Infections) recently published "Recommendations on HIV Testing in Hong Kong" (The Recommendations).

"In view of the rising trend of late presentation and the fact that HIV infection is mainly acquired through sexual transmission, early detection of infection is essential. People who have had sex should get HIV testing at least once to keep track of their health status, and that people with risk behaviours should undergo regular screening. People with HIV should seek specialist care and HIV treatment as soon as possible for viral suppression and for health restoration," said Dr Lee Cheuk-kwong, the Chairman of the Scientific Committee on AIDS and STI, today.

The Recommendations contain sections on who to get tested, how to test, consent, post-test care and referral pathways, serving to provide references and practical guidance to healthcare professionals and frontline service providers in the community. Details of the Recommendations are available on the CHP's website at www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/24003.html.

HIV is the cause of AIDS. Sexual transmission remains the major mode of HIV transmission. Members of the public should use condoms consistently and properly to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. In addition, undergoing HIV antibody testing early is an important component in HIV prevention.

There are community resources available which enable members of the public to undergo HIV antibody testing. Members of the public can reserve a free, anonymous and confidential HIV antibody test by visiting the HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) or calling the AIDS Hotline (2780 2211). They can also order HIV self-test kits (oral fluid-based and blood-based (finger prick) testing kits) on the HIV Testing Service website, and collect the self-test kits at various pick-up locations in Hong Kong. In addition, members of the public can access to the above services via the link to HIV Testing Service website after downloading the "Department of Health @DH Mobile App".

Dr Wong stressed that HIV infection is a manageable chronic disease. Early HIV treatment with antiretroviral drugs can effectively prevent the progression to AIDS and other complications. Lifelong antiretroviral treatment is indicated for all people with HIV, and the treatment remarkably improves their health and possibility of survival. Moreover, those who achieve sustained viral suppression to an undetectable level with treatment will not transmit the virus through sex, i.e. Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U).

The public may visit the following pages for more information on HIV/AIDS: the Virtual AIDS Office (www.aids.gov.hk), the Red Ribbon Centre (www.rrc.gov.hk), the HIV Testing Service website (www.hivtest.gov.hk) and

the Gay Men HIV Information website (www.21171069.gov.hk).



[Import of poultry meat and products from Saitama Prefecture in Japan suspended](#)

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (November 26) that in view of a notification from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5 avian influenza in Saitama Prefecture in Japan, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the area 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 2 000 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and about 227.42 million poultry eggs from Japan in the first nine months of this year.

"The CFS has contacted the Japanese authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the World Organisation for Animal Health and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

[Exchange Fund Bills tender results](#)

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

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date : November 26, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2448
Issue date : November 27, 2024
Maturity date : February 26, 2025
Amount applied : HK\$156,600 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$64,684 MN
Average yield accepted : 4.04 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 4.09 PCT
Pro rata ratio* : About 64 PCT
Average tender yield : 4.21 PCT

Tender date : November 26, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2477
Issue date : November 27, 2024
Maturity date : May 28, 2025
Amount applied : HK\$41,350 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$15,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 3.79 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 3.83 PCT
Pro rata ratio* : About 72 PCT
Average tender yield : 3.89 PCT

* "Pro rata ratio" refers to the average percentage of allotment with respect to each tender participant's tendered amount at the "highest yield accepted" level.

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning December 2, 2024:

Tender date : December 3, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2449
Issue date : December 4, 2024
Maturity date : March 5, 2025
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$63,072 MN

Tender date : December 3, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2478
Issue date : December 4, 2024
Maturity date : June 4, 2025
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$13,000 MN

Tender date : December 6, 2024
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : M2408
Issue date : December 9, 2024
Maturity date : January 8, 2025
Tenor : 30 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$800 MN

External merchandise trade statistics for October 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (November 26) the external merchandise trade statistics for October 2024. In October 2024, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 3.5% and 4.5% respectively.

In October 2024, the value of total exports of goods increased by 3.5% over a year earlier to \$393.0 billion, after a year-on-year increase by 4.7% in September 2024. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 4.5% over a year earlier to \$424.0 billion in October 2024, after a year-on-year increase by 1.4% in September 2024. A visible trade deficit of \$31.0 billion, equivalent to 7.3% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in October 2024.

For the first 10 months of 2024 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods increased by 9.9% over the same period in 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 6.8%. A visible trade deficit of \$301.7 billion, equivalent to 7.5% of the value of imports of goods, was

recorded in the first 10 months of 2024.

Comparing the three-month period ending October 2024 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 3.7%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods decreased by 0.4%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing October 2024 with October 2023, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 5.3%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular the Philippines (+36.1%), Vietnam (+31.3%), Thailand (+21.8%), Malaysia (+20.8%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+8.6%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to India (-34.3%) and Korea (-15.0%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the United Kingdom (-38.0%) and the Netherlands (-14.5%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to the USA (+5.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (+32.4%), the USA (+23.1%), the Philippines (+21.7%), Taiwan (+18.2%), Singapore (+15.6%) and the Mainland (+2.6%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of imports from Thailand (-19.8%).

For the first 10 months of 2024 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Thailand (+26.4%), Vietnam (+25.6%), the Mainland (+17.1%) and the USA (+12.3%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to India (-14.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Vietnam (+37.6%), Korea (+35.0%), Singapore (+17.3%), the Mainland (+7.9%) and Malaysia (+6.8%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of imports from the Philippines (-7.8%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing October 2024 with October 2023, increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$17.8 billion or +10.4%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$12.9 billion or +7.3%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$10.6 billion or +36.6%).

For the first 10 months of 2024 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$173.8 billion or +10.8%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$103.5 billion or +31.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$139.8 billion or +8.5%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$102.0 billion or +39.0%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports continued to grow in October 2024 over a year earlier. Exports to the Mainland, the United States and the European Union saw increases. Those to other major Asian markets showed mixed performance.

Looking ahead, the increased global economic uncertainties and the possible escalation of trade conflicts would pose challenges to Hong Kong's export performance, but the Mainland's various measures to boost its economy should provide support to demand for goods exported from Hong Kong. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for October 2024. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2021 to October 2024, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for October 2024 are shown in Table 4, whereas the values of imports of goods from 10 main suppliers are given in Table 5.

Tables 6 and 7 show the values of total exports and imports of 10 principal commodity divisions for October 2024.

All the merchandise trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the periods of comparison. A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external merchandise trade for October 2024 will be released in mid-December 2024.

The October 2024 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in October 2024 and will be available in early December 2024. Users can browse and download the report at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020005&scode=230).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4691).