

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (December 1):

Reporter: Regarding the flu jabs, do you think Hong Kong should inspect the quality of the flu jabs on itself? Regarding the Centre for Food Safety, do you think there is any serious mismanagement and how to improve it?

Secretary for Food and Health: As far as the flu vaccination is concerned, Hong Kong has a drug registration system to ensure that any drugs imported to Hong Kong are safe and effective, and that the quality of the drugs are up to a certain required standard. This mechanism has been going on for a long time, and we have successfully ensured all the drugs coming into Hong Kong are passing through this particular system. As far as surveillance of the drugs is concerned, for this particular incident, because there is public concern about this usual mechanism, we have taken samples to look at whether there are any particles in the vaccines and sent the samples to the laboratory. In the future, we will continue to look at the international standardised practice and see if there will be measures to manage particular incident and see how it goes.

We reckon that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has published a report in which some of the problems listed involve the work of the Centre for Food Safety. First of all, I have asked the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene and the Controller of the Centre for Food Safety to seriously look into the report to see what measures they should take in order to improve those situation that have listed in the report. Hong Kong always has an effective surveillance system. Every year the Centre for Food Safety has taken 65 000 samples in Hong Kong including imported food, as well as at different levels including import, distribution, retail and so on. So far food safety is actually ensured because 99.9 percent of the food are safe according to the test of the Centre for Food Safety. The Centre for Food Safety has also recently strengthened its manpower and is starting to look into how best to improve data collection and also the traceability of food incidents. A lot of work is actually ongoing, but the PAC report has found these cross-sectional problems, therefore the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene will seriously look into it. If there are issues about the need of more manpower and more resources, we will provide in order to ensure surveillance and control on food safety in Hong Kong is done well.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)