



**HONG
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Food Safety: Hong Kong's Experience

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Food Safety: Hong Kong's Experience

- Overview of Hong Kong's food safety regulatory system
- Our cooperation with Mainland China
- Challenges of regulators and businesses



- “One Country, Two Systems”
- Full autonomy in administering food safety; e.g. treatment of U.S. beef products
- Imports 90% of food, 60% from Mainland China (fresh produce, live food animals)



HK's Food Safety System: 4 Pillars

- Legislation and enforcement
- Risk management and surveillance
- Risk communication
- International cooperation



Legislation and Enforcement

- Rule-based, specified limits on harmful substances
- Registration of all food importers and suppliers, and record keeping
- Powers to impose ban or mandatory recall
- All food establishments to be licensed
- Labelling of ingredients/nutrition information
- Centre for Food Safety: multi-discipline team



Risk Management and Surveillance

- Regular, targeted, thematic, and seasonal surveillance
- 65,000 samples tested every year/9 samples per 1,000 population. Over 99% satisfactory
- Results released monthly with details and posted on-line (immediate alert if serious)
- Contingency plans, exercises and drills (e.g. nuclear incidents, avian flu, etc.)



Risk Communication

- Experts, food trade, and general public
- Over 85% households have broadband access, mobile penetration 240%
- [Web site](#), Facebook, Apps, eNews, email/SMS notifications – about 43,000 active accounts
- Trade consultation forums and consumer liaison groups
- Strategy: open and transparent



International Cooperation

- Alerts from overseas jurisdictions of food incidents in exporting countries
- Monitor international food safety events and assess potential impact on HK
- World Health Organization, Codex, World Organization for Animal Health
- Expert Committee with HK, Mainland and overseas experts



Cooperation with Mainland China

- Registered farms and plants to qualify for export to Hong Kong, health certificates, documentary trail
- Visit to farms and plants by HK inspectors
- Agreed communication channels and protocols for handling incidents (e.g. unsatisfactory samples)
- Not just “One Country, **Two Systems**”, but also “One Country, **Two Pigs**”



Challenges: Build Legal Framework

- Don't make perfect the enemy of good
- Go for something that can be implemented and complied with
- Prepare to make trade-offs: stable supply, compliance cost, private sector capability, grace periods, phased implementation



Challenges: Build Trust

- Credibility is everything, but ... people inherently do not trust regulators
- The more you test, the more problems you find
- People believe in bad news rather than good news
- “You must be hiding something from us”



Challenges: Build Trust

- “When did you first know about it? Why has it taken so long to tell us?”
- “You should have found it first”
- “You should have found it earlier”
- “Powell Doctrine”: deploy overwhelming strike capability during a major food safety crisis
- Examples: [Fukushima](#), low iodine [infant formula](#)



Challenges: Build Capacity

- Food safety is a very intensive government operation
- Build capacity in the field but also tackle other systemic weakness: business ethics, rule of law, transparency, accountability, coordination within government, etc.
- Long process: took Hong Kong more than 30 years to get to where we are



Role of Businesses

- Responsibilities and opportunities
- Private sector can help upgrade skills, self-regulate and provide reality check
- Rising middle class and growing market for quality, branded food products
- Chinese enterprises to “Go Global” for know-how and technology
- Food industry a major victim of food incidents and a key partner to clean up the act



Prospects of Reform

- The building blocks are there – need to scale up
- Challenges: 1.3 billion people, vast country, small producers and suppliers, economy in transition, systemic issues
- Start with large cities first?
- “One Country, One Pig”?