

Press Release (This is provisional translation. Please refer to the original text written in Japanese.)

4 April 2011

Policy Planning and Communication Division,
Inspection and Safety Division,
Department of Food Safety

To Press and those whom may concern,

Provisional remarks on radioactive materials present in food
(in relation to the accident of the Fukushima nuclear power plant)

This is an announcement that the Food Sanitation Subcommittee, Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council, was held today and that the attached “provisional remarks on radioactive materials present in food” has been compiled.

Attachment

April 4, 2011

Provisional remarks on radioactive materials present in food

Food Sanitation Subcommittee

Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council

Following the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant of the Tokyo Electric Power Company on March 11, 2011, radiation was detected in its surrounding environment. Starting March 17, from the viewpoint of preventing sanitation hazards resulting from eating and drinking, and thereby protect citizen's good health, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) has decided to tentatively use the "Indices relating to limits on food and drink ingestion" indicated by the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan as provisional regulation values. Foods which exceed these levels shall be deemed to be regulated by Article 6, Item 2 of the Food Sanitation Act and measures have been taken to ensure that such foods are not supplied to the public to eat.

On March 20, the Minister of Health, Labour, and Welfare asked for an opinion of the chairperson of the Food Safety Commission of Japan on the matter of "setting indexes for radioactive substances present in food." In response, on March 29, the chairperson issued the "emergency report on radioactive materials" (hereafter referred to as the "emergency report").

Furthermore, on April 1, in light of the "emergency report" and the Nuclear Safety Commission's advice, the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters expressed its opinion that, for the meantime, it was appropriate to maintain the current provisional regulation values.

We have never experienced the current situations in our Japanese history. The Subcommittee is of the view that the MHLW's measures to urgently establish the provisional regulation values based on Article 6, Item 2 of the Food Sanitation Act was appropriate.

In the "emergency report," the Food Safety Commission of Japan mentions that the equivalent dose and effective dose of radioactive substance that the provisional regulation values are based should not be changed. It also says that the Commission will continue to "conduct an assessment of the effects of food on health within the scope that the commission is consulted on in the future". The view of the Nuclear Emergency Response Headquarters, in light of the advice of the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan, is that it is appropriate to maintain the current provisional regulation values for the time being, considering that the emission of radioactive substances has not been restored to its normal state. Taking into consideration of the above, the Subcommittee is of the view that the provisional regulation values should be maintained under the present circumstances.

The Food Safety Commission has indicated the followings regarding its review: "The emergency report has been compiled under urgent circumstances and that there is still a need to conduct an assessment of the effects of food on health in the future within the scope that the Committee is consulted on." "Various problems remain to be considered including the carcinogen risk which has not yet been reviewed in detail. Especially in regard to uranium and plutonium, it is also necessary to conduct an assessment by considering actual amount of exposure to these substances, conduct an assessment as genotoxic carcinogen in detail, and/or consider nuclide disposition." Accordingly, the subcommittee will compile its remarks again as the Food Safety Commission continues to conduct an assessment of the effects of food on health in the future.

For the MHLW, the Subcommittee asks the organization to make efforts in (1) strengthening the inspection and monitoring systems, (2) preparing detail regulations, and (3) enhancing the content and opportunity on risk communication with the public, in order to enhance the safety and a sense of security among the public in regard to the health effects of radioactive materials.

Also, the Subcommittee expects all relevant organizations, including relevant ministries and local governments, to perform its duty in enhancing the safety of the nation and a sense of security regarding the health effects of radioactive materials by mutually cooperating and putting forth every effort.