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Macao Food Safety Center Established

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Approved By:

Erich Kuss

Prepared By:

Caroline Yuen

Report Highlights:

The Macao Food Safety Center was officially established on October 20, 2013, coinciding with the commencement of the Food Safety Law. The creation of the center is a new set up to carry out strengthened food safety control measures. The Center is responsible for implementing the new Food Safety Law which covers food safety surveillance, risk assessment and standard development. The mandatory inspection of meat, produce, dairy products, eggs and seafood remains under the portfolio of the Department of Food and Animal Inspection and Control. Both the Food Safety Center and the Department of Food and Animal Inspection fall under the umbrella of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau. The establishment of the Food Safety Center and the implementation of the Food Safety Law do not change any of the import requirements.

The Food Safety Control Authority in Macao

The Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) is the principal food safety authority, among its many other oversight responsibilities (including for culture, recreation, roads, sewerage, environmental hygiene and parks). While all policy direction rests with Bureau's Administration Committee which is composed of a Chairman, two vice chairmen, and five members, the executive arm of food related policy lies with the Department of Food and Animal Inspection and Control and the newly established Food Safety Center. The Bureau's umbrella also covers a government laboratory which supports all testing associated with food safety regulation. An organization chart is attached at the Annex.

The Macao Food Safety Center

Back in 2008, the Macao government decided to introduce a Food Safety Law, which would fill in the gap in the existing food regulations. This piece of regulation was designed to be the cornerstone underpinning Macao's food safety control and representing a significant milestone for a comprehensive approach. [Gain Report 1328](#) provides details on the Law.

A Macao Food Safety Center would be established with the mission of implementing the Food Safety Law. In this connection, the Macao government set up a Food Safety Coordination Group in 2008 for the purposes of preparing for the establishment of the Food Safety Center. With years of preparation, the Food Safety Law was passed in March 2013, with the commencement date coinciding with the establishment of the Food Safety Center in October 2013. Decree 210/2013 well specifies the Center's responsibilities which include setting food standards, handling food incidents, and conducting food surveillance and food safety campaigns. To discharge this wide spectrum of duties, the Center currently has a staff of over 60 working in three divisions, namely, Risk Management and Planning, Risk Assessment and Risk Communication.

The Division of Risk Management and Planning is tasked to study and map out the long term food safety strategy. The decree empowers the Center to implement the Food Safety Law with respect to preventive, control and surveillance measures.

The Division of Risk Assessment is to conduct risk assessments for food safety control. Based on risk analysis, it will develop food safety standards and guidelines to serve as a law enforcing yardstick to exercise food safety control. The first of these food standards is the [Regulation on Veterinary Drugs in Food](#) implemented in October 2013 via decree 13/2013.

Acknowledging the need to maintain close communication with the industry and the public, the Food Safety Center also includes the Division of Risk Communication. This Division is to establish contact not only with the local industry and the public but also with international food safety authorities. It issues alerts on food incidents, and conducts seminars and campaigns promoting food safety.

Other Food Related Regulatory Oversight

The creation of the Food Safety Center does not affect the existing food related regulatory oversight by other incumbent Bureaus or IACM divisions. For example, the Department of Food and Animal Inspection and Control under the IACM will continue to discharge the food safety regulation duties over products that require mandatory inspection under decree 40/2004. These products include meat, dairy products, eggs, seafood and produce. Hence, import control of these products also fall under the portfolio of this Department. Decree 40/2004 empowers the IACM officials to inspect products and documents and draw samples when necessary. It is also this Department's responsibility to determine certification requirements of the prescribed products. The establishment of the Food Safety Center and the implementation of the Food Safety Law do not change any of the import requirements.

Under the IACM is a government laboratory. Its major function is to test water quality and food products. The government laboratory has ISO17025 certification. Its accredited testing items have amounted to 76 and 74 of which are on food products. In 2012, it conducted testing on 5,600 water samples and 51,000 food samples. Food samples were drawn from produce, seafood, dairy and meat products. The laboratory also conducted bird flu testing.

Two separate bureaus from the IACM, the Economic Services maintains its responsibilities for the labeling policy and the Health Department for infant formula and approving health claims on food labels respectively. The licensing for production premises, restaurants and other eating outlets are still handled by the Economic Services, Government Tourist office and the IACM respectively.

Despite the fact that some other government bureaus are engaged in food-related regulatory oversight, the IACM assumes the leading role as the food safety regulatory agency in Macao. Under the Food Safety Law, other government bureaus are required to provide support to the IACM on food safety management when necessary.

Annex: The Organization Chart of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau

