

Agreement hope over pesticides

THE Hongkong Government hopes to reach an agreement with Chinese authorities on regulating the use of pesticides on Chinese farms.

A meeting on Thursday between the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, the Municipal Services Branch and the Shenzhen Animal and Plant Quarantine Service will discuss the Hongkong Government's concern on food hygiene.

Special attention will be given to the recent case in which more than 100 people suffered food poisoning after eating choi sum sprayed with a banned pesticide, reportedly on a farm in Shenzhen.

The meeting, held twice a year, does not normally attract much attention as it covers routine matters.

Dr Ron Perry, hygiene adviser of the Municipal Service Branch, who will attend the meeting, said the branch was consulting the Attorney-General over the possibility of taking legal action against the hawkers who sold the contaminated vegetables.

Meanwhile samples of vegetables are still being taken at the Man Kam To border point and Cheung Sha Wan Market to ensure that tainted vegetables are not entering the market.

A spokesman for the Agriculture and Fisheries Department said they had warned the Yuen Long Hung Shui Kiu Vegetable Marketing Co-operative Society and the Cheung Sha Wan Market not to accept any choi sum from two farms in Shenzhen which they believed had supplied the contaminated vegetables.

The deputy director of the Shenzhen Animal and Plant Quarantine Service, Mr Ye Zhangming, who will also attend the meeting on Thursday, doubted that the choi sum came from Shenzhen. "Methamidophos is banned in Shenzhen. We have 1,500 technicians checking the 240 farms in Shenzhen and I don't think the tainted choi sum came from this city.

"It could have come from Guangzhou, Hui Yang or even Hongkong itself," Mr Ye said.