

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: March 23, 2023

Report Number: HK2023-0012

Report Name: The Hong Kong Wonton - Volume 3 Issue 6

Country: Hong Kong

Post: Hong Kong

Report Category: Agriculture in the News, Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional, Retail Foods, Market Promotion/Competition

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Report Highlights:

Bite size local news, Post reports and activity summaries wrapped by ATO Hong Kong. In this issue: Aspiring Chefs Explore “The Science of Souffle” With U.S. Ingredients and Local Flavors; Business Sentiment Among Hong Kong SMEs Improved in February; Hong Kong Welcomes 1.46 million Tourists in February; International Airlines Re-build Networks in Hong Kong; Large Scale Events Returning to Hong Kong; COVID-19 Shrank Macau’s GDP by 26.3 Percent in 2022; Resumption of Air Services from Macau Pick up Pace; Macau’s Economic Prosperity Index Continues to Rise; Hong Kong Retail Sales Up Seven Percent in January; Growing Demand for Local Vegetables in Hong Kong.

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wrapped by ATO Hong Kong

Mar. 3 – 16, 2023 | Vol. 3 Issue #6



ASPIRING CHEFS EXPLORE “THE SCIENCE OF SOUFFLE” WITH U.S. INGREDIENTS AND LOCAL FLAVORS

On March 14, ATO, in partnership with the U.S. Consulate’s Public Affairs Section (PAS), hosted a cooking course for local student chefs at the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi). PAS’s visiting speaker, U.S. astrophysicist and co-host of the Netflix series *Baking Impossible*, Dr. Hakeem Oluseyi, spoke about the science of baking and his inspiring personal story. Local chef Phyllis Lam led students in preparing their own souffles using U.S. eggs, flour, milk, and cheese, in combination with local flavors such as citrus and black sesame. The U.S. Poultry and Egg Export Council, U.S. Wheat Associates, and the U.S. Dairy Export Council contributed to the event.

ATTENTION U.S. EXPORTERS! HONG KONG BUYERS ARE LOOKING FOR:

ATO maintains close contacts with buyers from Hong Kong and Macau. Currently Hong Kong buyers are seeking U.S. suppliers of the following products:

- Yellow corn
- Soybean meal

If you are interested in supplying these products, please contact ATOHongKong@usda.gov provide your company information, contact person, and email address. We will connect you with interested buyers.

ECONOMY



Business Sentiment Among Hong Kong Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Improved in February [[Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department](#), March 9]

The Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department released its Monthly Survey results on Business Situation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) for February 2023. A Government spokesman said that overall business sentiment among SMEs further improved in February as local economic activities revived and normal travel between Hong Kong and the mainland resumed fully. Views on the business situation in one month's time were also more optimistic than earlier. The overall employment situation continued to improve. **ATO Notes:** The ongoing normalization of economic activities and improvement in the number of visitor arrivals should bode well for business sentiment. Local economists do observe that tightening financial conditions and weaker global economic growth will continue to bring uncertainties. On March 10, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [rescinded requirements](#) for negative pre-departure COVID-19 test results for travelers to the United States from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Macau. U.S. agricultural exporters considering travel to Hong Kong please consult the latest U.S. Department of State's [Travel Advisory](#), the U.S. Consulate's [COVID-19 information page](#), or contact ATO Hong Kong.

Hong Kong Welcomed 1.46 Million Tourists in February [[The Standard](#), March 15]

A total of 1.46 million visitors, of which 75 percent were mainlanders, came to the city in February. This marks the peak of monthly traveler headcount three years after the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) announced on March 15 that the monthly number of visitors who came to Hong Kong in February doubled and marked the first time the figure exceeded one million in a single month since the outbreak began in February 2020. "Visitors' number has recovered to 30 percent of the pre-pandemic level," said the HKTB. Among that, mainland arrivals tripled from 280,000 to 1.1 million people, and non-mainland visitors, mainly from Southern East Asian countries. In addition, the HKTB announced more offers of welcoming gifts would be added to the current "Hong Kong Goodies" visitor consumption vouchers catering to new visitors. The number of outlets offering "Hong Kong Goodies" will also double from the current 1,500 to around 3,000 across the city. **ATO Notes:** The increase in number of visitors marks the gradual recovery of Hong Kong's inbound tourism which benefits primarily the food service and hospitality sectors but also the retail food sector. It is expected that the next waves of tourist arrivals will fall on Easter holidays in April and the Chinese Golden Week holidays in May.

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Forty-Five Percent of Hong Kong Employers Will Hire in Second Quarter [[The Standard](#), March 15]

Forty-five percent of Hong Kong employers are looking to hire in the next three months according to the latest employment outlook for the city in the second quarter of this year. The employment outlook was conducted by ManpowerGroup and surveyed nearly 39,000 employers globally, including 510 from Hong Kong. Among local employers, some 15 percent expect a decrease in staff size, while 38 percent forecast no change to be made to the staff size. After adjusting for seasonal variation, the outlook stands at a positive 30 percent. Hiring intentions in Hong Kong increased by 8 percent quarter-over-quarter and increased by 27 percent when compared to this time last year. Lancy Chui, senior vice president at ManpowerGroup Greater China, said the overall employment outlook is improving as Hong Kong reopened all borders with mainland China and the economy is gradually recovering from the pandemic. She also expected the number of travelers to Hong Kong will rise as the city's global promotion campaign "Hello Hong Kong" and its long-haul express rail services, which fully resume in April, can further boost tourism and related sectors. **ATO Notes:** It will take several months for Hong Kong's service sectors to recruit enough staff to serve the surging demand from local residents and the increasing number of international visitors. It is expected that Hong Kong employers' intention to increase staff size will normalize in the third quarter as most positions are filled.

International Airlines Actively Re-Building Networks in Hong Kong [Various Sources]

Regional and international airlines are actively re-building their networks in Hong Kong as the city has lifted its travel restrictions in January 2022. **Greater Bay Airlines Announced Order for Boeing Airplanes [[The Standard](#), March 3]**. The airline's CEO, Stanley Hui, said he planned to boost its fleet of planes as travel ramps up after years of COVID-19 restrictions. **British Airways to Double Hong Kong Flights [[The Standard](#), March 7]** starting at the end of March. The flights to and from Hong Kong and London will increase to 14 flights per week starting from March 26. Hong Kong based airline **Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd is ready to rebuild** and Hong Kong's hub status in 2023 [[The Standard](#), March 8]. Cathay is also struggling to bring in staff, while many pilots and crew are dissatisfied following cuts to perks and pay made during the pandemic when passenger capacity was as low as 2 percent of pre-COVID-19 days. The airline said it was operating about one-third of pre-pandemic passenger flight capacity by December and ended the year operating passenger flights to 58 destinations, double the 29 destinations the airline flew to in January 2022. It expects to operate at about 70 percent of its pre-pandemic passenger flight capacity by the end of 2023, with an aim to return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2024. **United Airlines Resumed Nonstop Flights Between Hong Kong and San Francisco on March 6 [[The Standard](#), March 10]**. This marks the airline's first passenger flight service out of the city since the start of the pandemic. United's daily nonstop service from Hong Kong to San Francisco directly connects Hong Kong travelers to the airline's largest hub airport on the U.S. West Coast, and numerous cities in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Latin America. **ATO Notes:** As Hong Kong has lifted its travel restrictions in January, international travels are gradually resuming. Regional and international airlines are seeing the return of business opportunities amid the re-opening of the border of the vibrant city. It is expected that airlines will continue to increase the number of flights connecting Hong Kong to the world in the next few months. Greater number of flights also means improvements in available air cargo space for U.S. food products severely limited during the pandemic years, particularly during the first half of 2022.

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Large Scale Events Returning to Hong Kong [Various Sources]

As Hong Kong lifted its mask mandate in March, the last of its stringent restrictions under COVID-19, the city is welcoming the return of multiple large-scale events that had been suspended under the pandemic. **International Music Festival Bares Out “Hong Kong's Back”** [[The Standard, March 6](#)] “Clockenflap” is the biggest international music festival in Hong Kong and the first outdoor music event since the government lifted the mask mandate. Participants said they were thrilled not to wear masks or observe social distancing measures. Held annually since 2008, the festival was canceled in 2019 due to the mass protests and again in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. **Hong Kong Rugby Seven Expecting 90,000 Spectators** [[The Standard, March 7](#)] Fans will be able to watch both men's and women's rugby competitions for the first time at the upcoming Cathay/HSBC Hong Kong Sevens. The Hong Kong Rugby Union, organizer of the Sevens, has sold more than 25,000 tickets and expects the tournament to draw crowds of 30,000 people at the Hong Kong Stadium each day. The last tournament was held last November for the first time in over three years following several cancellations during the pandemic. **Hong Kong Flower Show Returns** [[The Standard, March 10](#)] Hong Kong's Victoria Park is blooming again as the city's Flower Show after a three-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some 400,000 exotic flowers, including about 40,000 hydrangeas, as well as potted plants, floral arrangements and landscapes by local, mainland and overseas organizations will be on display at the 10-day event, along with stalls selling flowers and other horticultural products. Assistant director of Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department Luk Chi-kwong expects the show to attract about 630,000 people, similar to the one in 2019. This year, 225 organizations and 72 exhibitors from 10 countries including China, Japan, Indonesia, Korea, Oman, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, are taking part in the show. **Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races Returns** [[The Standard, March 14](#)] on June 24-25 after a four-year hiatus, according to the Tourism Board. The two-day event will be packed with an array of intense races to fill Victoria Harbor, and fans can cheer paddlers on to the finish line from the harbor's promenade. **ATO Notes:** The return of local and international events symbolizes that Hong Kong is heading towards its pre-pandemic normalcy and vibrancy.

Hong Kong Among Top Three with Most Ultra-Rich Homeowners [[The Standard, March 8](#)]

What do New York, London, and Hong Kong have in common? It is where the world's wealthiest people live. New York is the world's most popular place for the super-rich to own a property, according to a new report by data firm Altrata. A total of 21,714 ultra-high-net-worth (UHNW) individuals — those worth over \$30 million — own either a primary or secondary residence in the city, the study found. Next up in the popularity stakes are London and Hong Kong, where 15,907 and 15,175 of the world's wealthiest people own homes. Los Angeles and Miami round out the top five, while a propensity for the wealthy to snap up second homes in Beijing puts the Chinese capital one spot ahead of Singapore. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong's affluence is comparable to that in New York and London, posing opportunities for premium foods and fine dining. Hong Kong is gradually recovering after the pandemic and the demand for quality foods and beverages is set to grow in 2023.

COVID-19 Shrank Macau GDP by 26.8 Percent in 2022 [[The Macau Post Daily, March 4](#)]

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Macau's gross domestic product (GDP) shrank 26.8 percent year-on-year in real terms last year, the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC) has announced. Macau's tourism and other economic activities were hindered last year by border entry curbs and lockdown measures imposed by the local government in response to the pandemic as well as the large-scale infections in the local community in June. Domestic demand fell 9.3 percent year-on-year; private consumption expenditure dropped 8.9 percent and government final consumption expenditure dipped 0.1 percent. Concerning external demand, exports of gaming services declined 52.7 percent and other tourism services declined 29.6 percent year-on-year, prompted by a 26 percent drop in the number of visitors. As a result, exports of services shrank 32.1 percent, while merchandise exports dipped 18.1 percent. In 2022, GDP amounted to \$22 billion and per-capita GDP stood at \$32,415. **ATO Notes:** Macau confirmed its first COVID-19 case in January 2020. The local government lifted its COVID-19 curbs in early 2023 and the city's economy is expected to have double-digit rebound in 2023.

Resumption of Air Services from Macau Picking Up Pace [[The Macao News, March 9](#)]

The Macau airport will offer a significant expansion of air services in March, according to data from the Civil Aviation Authority cited in Jornal Tribuna de Macau. The paper reports that services to 12 destinations will resume, while flights to eight existing destinations will become more frequent. On March 14, Air Macau reportedly will increase its Taipei service from two to seven flights per week and resumes regular services to Singapore on March 23. Low-cost carrier Thai Vietjet launches four weekly flights between Macau and Bangkok on March 15, aiming to increase the number to seven as of June 1. Meanwhile, Cambodia Angkor Air will join JC International and Cambodia Airways in offering flights to Phnom Penh. From March 17, Hainan Airlines will offer two weekly flights to Haikou. On March 26, flights will resume to at least 10 destinations in mainland China and elsewhere in Asia, including Quanzhou, Guiyang, Chiang Mai and Kota Kinabalu. Services will also be available to Osaka, Clark airport near Manila, and Danang and Cam Ranh in Vietnam. According to the official data, there were 1,687 commercial flights handled at the airport in January, which represents a monthly increase of 36.2 percent. **ATO Notes:** As Macau lifted its travel restrictions in January, international travels are gradually resuming. Regional and international airlines are seeing the return of business opportunities amid the re-opening of the border. It is expected that airlines will continue to increase the number of flights connecting Macau to the world in the next few months.

Employment in Macau's Wholesale and Retail Sector Improved [[The Macao News, March 14](#)]

Macau's wholesale and retail sector began employing more people in the last quarter of 2022, according to the Statistics and Census Service (DSEC). In its periodic Survey on Manpower Needs and Wages, the DSEC found that the number of Macau residents working in wholesale and retail increased by 4.5 percent year-on-year to almost 65,500. More than 41,000 of those worked in retail – a jump of 4.1 percent. Job vacancies increased by almost 800 positions year-on-year. In contrast, a survey of Macau's gaming industry at the end of 2022 revealed continuing difficulties during the last months of the pandemic. Figures released earlier this month by the DSEC showed just 13 gaming jobs on offer in December, 45 less than the same month in 2021 and in stark contrast to the present labor shortage in gaming and hospitality in the wake of the lifting of travel restrictions in January. **ATO Notes:** Macau lifted its COVID-19 curbs early this year. It is expected that the city's economy and also the employment situation will improve in the second quarter of the year.

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Macau's Economic Prosperity Index Continues to Rise [[The Macao News](#), March 15]

The Macau Economic Association (MEA) predicts that the territory's Economic Prosperity Index will stabilize midway through the second quarter of 2023. The forecast was reported by public broadcaster TDM, which said that the index had recorded a "considerable rebound" in January and February, notching 3.6 and 4.0 respectively. The latter figure represents an earlier-than-expected fulfilment of the forecast made in February, when the MEA said the index would exceed 3.9 in the coming months. In comparison, the index stood at around 2.0 for most of 2022, hitting a low of 1.2 in July. The MEA credits the normalization of border policies between the territory, Hong Kong and mainland China for the improvement. Since the lifting of pandemic restrictions in January, tourism has seen a significant surge along with spikes in gaming revenue. According to the MEA, the index is set to reach 5.0 in May – a level regarded as "stable." **ATO Notes:** Macau lifted its COVID-19 curbs in January and its economy is recovering with the gradual increase in the number of tourists returning to the city.

HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND INSTITUTIONS



First Cruise to Make Hong Kong Home Port Since Pandemic [[South China Morning Post](#), March 10]

A passenger ship operated by Singapore's Resorts World Cruises, set up by Malaysian tycoon Lim Kok Thay following the demise of his Genting Hong Kong, has arrived in the city and made Kai Tak Cruise Terminal its home port. The ship, formerly Explorer Dream and rebranded Resorts World One, became the first cruise ship to make the terminal its home base since the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the sector. It set off on its inaugural cruise from Hong Kong on March 10 with nearly 3,000 passengers and crew on board. President of Resorts World Cruises Michael Goh said the ship choosing Hong Kong as its home port was an important milestone in the recovery of the tourism sector. Meanwhile, Worldwide Cruise Terminals, which manages Kai Tak, has resumed international ship calls after ceasing operations when the pandemic hit. Besides Resorts World One, it welcomed luxury cruise liner Mein Schiff 5 on March 8. Earlier in January, Silversea Cruises' Silver Spirit docked at Ocean Terminal, marking the return of the first international cruise ship in three years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

ATO Notes: Cruise ships did not visit Hong Kong during the height of the pandemic. Cruises were scrapped earlier last year after the government increased efforts to stem the spread of Omicron variants, crippling the industry and tourism in general. Hong Kong started to open-up last September when it removed its mandatory hotel quarantine policy for inbound travelers. The city resumed isolation-free travel with the mainland last month and lifted its mask mandate on March 1. The resumption of transport links for Hong Kong, such as the high-speed rail and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge would boost the city's international connectivity for cruise passengers while providing more options for pre- and post-trip excursions in the region.

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New Round of Consumption Vouchers Expected to Bring \$769 Million in Revenue to Hong Kong Eateries [[The Standard](#), March 14]

Hongkongers might spend less of their \$641 consumption voucher on dining than they had in the last two years, as caterers expect to pocket \$769 million, or 20 percent of the \$3.8 billion voucher, catering veteran Simon Wong claims. Residents will initially receive electronic vouchers worth \$385 from April 16, and another \$256 from July 16. Wong told a radio program he expects to see around 20 percent of the consumption vouchers spent on dining - down from 25 percent and 30 percent in previous rounds. He explained the drop could be due to various factors, including people spending less and traveling more, while also being a low season for the catering industry. Despite the reopening of the borders with the mainland, he said the city only saw some 30,000 mainland tourists daily. More tourists are expected during the Labor Day "Golden Week" from May 1, he added. **ATO Notes:** As Hong Kong has lifted its pandemic restrictions, the city's economy is gradually improving. The new round of consumption vouchers, even though dispersed after the prime of the Easter spending season in smaller amounts, are set to enhance the recovery of the city's food retail and food service sectors.

RETAIL



Hong Kong Retail Sales in January Up Seven Percent Year-on-Year [[The Standard](#), March 3]

Retail sales in Hong Kong beat market expectation to increase to \$4.6 billion in January, up 7 percent year-on-year, in the biggest growth since April 2022, according to latest figures released by the Census and Statistics Department. The January outcome also marked an increase for the second consecutive month. The higher-than-expected retail performance was due to improved consumer sentiments in January amid the reopening of border with the mainland, a government spokesman said. Looking forward, the spokesman said the retail sector would continue to benefit from the return of economic activities and visitors coming to Hong Kong. **ATO Notes:** While Hong Kong's annual food retail sales have held steady at \$12 billion under the pandemic, food retail sales in January 2023 were \$1.17 billion, a drop of 3.6 percent over the same period in 2022. The drop was mainly due to Hong Kong's lifting of most pandemic restrictions in January that prompted local residents to spend more lavishly at restaurants than food retail stores. It is expected that food retail sales will pick up as Hong Kong's economy gradually improves.

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TRADE



Hongkongers Called For Healthier Lifestyle on World Obesity Day [[The Standard](#), March 4]

In Hong Kong, about one in every two adults is overweight or obese, the Department of Health said on March 4, as it called on the public to adopt a healthier lifestyle in support of World Obesity Day. World Obesity Day was an annual campaign established in 2015, observed on March 4 since 2020. This year's theme is "Changing Perspectives: Let's Talk About Obesity." The department added that the local overweight and obesity situation deteriorated amid the pandemic with decreasing physical activities and changes in dietary patterns. The detection rates of overweight, including obesity, of primary and secondary school students increased from 18 and 20 percent in 2018-19 to 21 and 22 percent in 2021-22. School closures, online classes, decreased physical activity, and more screen time increased the risk of being overweight and obese, the department noted. The department added that about a quarter of adults performed insufficient physical activities, citing its own Population Health Survey 2020-22. Almost all Hongkongers (98 percent) aged 15 or above reported an inadequate daily intake of fruit and vegetables – an average of fewer than five servings. As eating out and ordering takeaway food are common dining options for citizens, the department has been enlisting the support of restaurants to provide healthier dishes through their "EatSmart Restaurant Star+" campaign. The department has also initiated the "StartSmart@school.hk" and "EatSmart@school.hk" campaigns to encourage healthy eating and physical activity to create an environment conducive to a healthy lifestyle in pre-primary institutions and primary schools. **ATO Notes:** Healthy eating is one of the growing consumer trends in Hong Kong as residents have become more health-conscious after the pandemic. This poses good opportunities for U.S. fresh, healthy and organic products.

Growing Demand for Local Vegetables in Hong Kong [[The Standard](#), March 10]

Hong Kong should boost its agriculture to supply 200 tons of vegetables for daily consumption, or 10 percent of what's needed, from the current 1.7 percent to guard against emergencies, an expert says. Jonathan Wong, head of the biology department at Baptist University, said demand for local vegetables has been on the rise. He was talking before the annual Organic Day (March 12) in Central pedestrian precinct, where people can meet local farmers and fishermen, buy organic vegetables for \$0.13 and join green workshops. According to Wong, "the number of people buying local organic vegetables has gone up, retailers have told us that more people are willing to pay extra for organic. That could be because of a slew of factors, including personal health during COVID-19. "As for supply, that's a question mark. Domestic Production has not gone up." In fact, Wong added, there is a downward trend. Hong Kong now has 129 certified organic farms compared to 149 in 2016. Total agricultural farmland in Hong Kong stands at around 4,500 hectares, although only some 760 hectares are being used actively, said the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. "If we can use 500 more hectares for farming that would help boost our self-sufficiency rate," Wong said. Citing Singapore as an example, he said the 724-

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square-kilometer island republic produces 30 percent of locally consumed vegetables. But Hong Kong, made up of over 1,100 sq km, supplies only 1.7 percent, relying heavily on imports from the mainland. That is equivalent to around 34 tons of the 2,000 tons Hongkongers go through each day, and only six tons are organic. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong has little land and hence it is a pricy commodity that has been mainly used for building high-rise housing, hotels, or commercial buildings. While the demand for local vegetables may grow, it is unlikely that number of local farms will grow significantly. Imported fruits and vegetables will continue to enjoy an edge in the Hong Kong market.

First Hong Kong Organic Day in Three Years [[The Standard](#), March 13]

More than 80 farms, fisheries and retailers set up stalls in Central on March 12 at the first Organic Day in three years. Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre marked the day with the theme "20 Years of Real Organic." The non-profit organization has launched various certification standards accredited by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements since its inception in March 2003. Its governing board chairman, Patrick Lau, said he hoped people could gain a better understanding of organic products and support local agriculturists. The event made the day for one fairgoer, Lai, who said she prefers organic food due to its freshness and lack of chemical fertilizers: "Organic food in the market is generally more expensive, so I'm pleased I was able to get fresh organic vegetables at a more affordable price." Another visitor, Lee, said she was not a usual organic user because "they're more expensive," but she knew of their health benefits. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong consumers consider organic farming more friendly to the environment and healthier to eat. The promotion of Hong Kong Organic Day boosts the demand for organic foods which are still dominated by imported products. Hong Kong recognizes the USDA organic seal. U.S. organic products are well known in the market for their quality and the demand for them is expected to grow in 2023.

Macau Expects 14,000 Trade Visitors in March-April [[The Macau Post Daily](#), March 7]

The Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) said in a statement on March 6 that over 14,000 attendees are projected to take part in annual enterprise and academic conferences slated to be held in Macau from this month through April. The statement noted that a large enterprise recently held its annual conference in Macau which was attended by nearly 2,000 business visitors from the mainland. The statement added that the conference organizer recognized Macau as being able to host large conventions and exhibitions, adding that reasons for choosing the city include its international-standard software and hardware facilities, its efficient and friendly service staff and the integrated hotels and resorts that offer venues to accommodate Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions (MICE), and leisure and recreational activities. According to the Statistics and Census Bureau (DSEC), the city hosted 460 MICE events last year. The government-run institute noted it hopes that Macau will stage 700-1,000 MICE events this year. **ATO Notes:** While gaming and tourism are still Macau's key industries, the city is aiming to develop itself as one of the key MICE hubs in the region.

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Hong Kong Customs Seized Over 300 KG of Dried Fish Maws and Shark Fins [[The Standard](#), March 13]

Hong Kong Customs was able to get ahold of illegal shipments of restricted dried fish maw and shark fin valued at over \$38,000, arresting two men. In two express shipments that arrived from Bangladesh on March 9, customs officers' inspection found the dried fish maw and dried shark fin of endangered species. Senior Investigator Wong Chi-keung said the method to hide the restricted products along with other products is common, but in this case, the criminals did it in a more meticulous manner as they used unrestricted species to cover up the illegal goods. He added that Customs will not rule out the possibility of further law enforcement actions. Under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting an endangered species without a license is liable to a maximum fine of \$1.3 million and imprisonment for 10 years.

Carcinogenic Contaminants Found in Meat Jerky in Hong Kong [[The Standard](#), March 16]

Two out of five meat jerky, meat floss and meat crisps contain carcinogenic contaminants that could increase cancer risk, according to the Hong Kong Consumer Council. Thirty samples of dried meat snacks bought at retail outlets for \$1.5 to \$22 per packet were tested between October and November last year. A potential contaminant, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), was found in more than 40 percent of the samples, including nine pork jerky and four beef jerky packets. Malaysian brand Bee Cheng Hiang's barbecued beef jerky was detected with the highest PAHs content of 18.2 micrograms per kilogram, exceeding the European Union's limit by 50 percent. The council's Victor Lui urged manufacturers to review their products regularly. He added: "Consumers should also think twice before consuming dried meat snacks and other barbecued meat and remove burned parts before consumption." People are recommended to avoid eating crispy sliced pork by Lim Jing Hieng from Thailand as the council found a banned veterinary drug, furazolidone metabolite. The council also urged manufacturers to be more vigilant and "to step up testing to ensure their products meet local regulatory requirements," Lui said. **ATO Notes:** Hong Kong consumers are health-conscious and place utmost importance to food safety. U.S. foods are recognized in the market for their quality and safety.

Dried Apricots Found to Contain Banned Sweeteners in Macau [[The Macau Post Daily](#), March 7]

The Macau Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) urged the public on March 3 to stop eating the pre-packed dried apricots supplied by the Turkish manufacturer HAZARBEY as they were found to contain two sweeteners – "cyclohexyl sulfamate" and "saccharin" – which are banned for use in this food category. An IAM statement underlined that the local food market has been ordered to stop selling the problematic product and to recall it from their consumers.

Lemon Slices Snack Found to Contain Banned Sweeteners in Macau [[The Macau Post Daily](#), March 14]

The Macau Municipal Affairs Bureau (IAM) said in a statement on March 13 that a lemon slices snack sold at the Wing Kut Street Lemon King snack shop on Rua de Coelho do Amaral was found to contain excessive sweetener – "cyclohexyl sulfamate" (commonly known as Sodium cyclamate) which exceeded the legally permitted maximum amount in line with local health standards, urging the public not to eat the product. The statement underlined that the bureau has ordered the shop to stop selling the problematic product that was imported from Thailand with the best-before date of February 2, 2024, and to recall it from its customers.

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