Kimberly Hwang 您好，

Regarding your letter to Minister’s mailbox dated October 14, 2019, titled “Policy Suggestions Regarding Pesticides and Heavy Metals”, the COA’s reply is as follows:

一、The COA tasks its subsidiary Agriculture and Food Agency (AFA) to test for pesticide residues in agricultural crops. Each year crops in the field or at packing houses are randomly sampled. Taking 2019 as an example, from January to August, of 12,355 samples collected and tested, 11,985 were found qualified, resulting in a qualify-rate of 97%. For unqualified products, corresponding producers are notified to suspend shipment and are subject to counseling on the safe use of pesticides and follow-up sampling. The latest list of unqualified products is irregularly made available on the AFA’s website. As for the detection of heavy metal contaminations, surveillance is performed on food crops in the field by citing the EPA (Environmental Protection Administration)-promulgated contaminated sites. Around 500 tests for heavy metal content are performed each year, with those exceeding the limits set forth by Act Governing Food Safety and Sanitation compulsorily destroyed.

二、Regarding your suggestion that the government is to upload test results to Taiwan Agricultural Products Production Traceability System, to our latest knowledge (2019), the function for displaying pesticide residue test results has been implemented, where viewers can find the self-testing results by the producer on the product they search. That system also draws data from the results of pesticide residue tests performed by Taiwan Agricultural Chemicals and Toxic Substances Research Institute, making sure that the most comprehensive information on residue conditions is available to users accessing Taiwan Agricultural Products Production Traceability System through QR Code.

三、The said Traceability System has also been integrated with locations of EPA-promulgated contaminated sites, which is routinely updated, to make producers aware of if its production activities are in heavy-metal contaminated fields. According to the latest figure, the promulgated farmland with heavy metal contamination is 335 hectares, accounting for merely 0.042% of the country’s arable area. Any food crop produced in the contaminated field will be ordered destroyed, while the land will be forcefully set aside. Thus, it is safe to say that heavy metal contamination isn’t what domestic consumers shopping for agricultural products should be overly concerned about.

四、Regarding your suggestion to add warning messages on the QR label, the COA will take that into consideration when making changes to its policy.

Thank you for providing us with those valuable insights. Your concern over Taiwan’s agri-safety system is highly appreciated!

Best regards,

Minister’s Mailbox Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan