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Subject: Speech by Mr Koo Tsai Kee, 5 Feb, 10am

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR KOO TSAI KEE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE  
LAUNCH OF THE SINGAPORE QUALITY EGGS SCHEME (SQES) AT NTUC HOUGANG MALL, ATRIUM ON 5  
FEB 99 AT 10.00 AM.

Mr Chandra Das, Chairman, NTUC FairPrice;

Assoc Prof Low Seow Chay, Adviser to the Poultry Farmers' Association;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. A very good morning to all of you. I am very pleased to be here this morning to launch the Singapore Quality Eggs Scheme, or SQES in short. This scheme, implemented by the Primary Production Department, aims to promote the production and sale of quality eggs in Singapore.
2. The SQES is a voluntary scheme which requires member farms to adhere to a Code of Practice for Shell Egg Production. This Code sets the standards of hygiene on the production, storage and packaging of shell eggs intended for consumption. Only eggs that meet with these requirements are allowed to carry the official SQES logo, which is a certification trademark.
3. Let me briefly give you an overview on the criteria for using this SQES logo. Participating farms in this Scheme pay \$500 as an annual membership fee. Renewal of membership is subjected to passing an inspection and auditing of the farm infrastructure and poultry health records. Should there be non-compliance to the rules and regulations set out in the Scheme or should there be genuine complaints on the quality of the eggs, the membership will be revoked. It will be an offence to continue using the logo once the membership has been revoked.
4. As for the technical criteria, they consist of having to submit a farm dossier which contain information such as the breed of layers, the vaccination programme in place and the feed ingredients used. The other criteria cover the farm structure, farm management and maintenance. These farms are required to have sanitation and rodent control programmes both documented and complied with.
5. In addition, PPD officers will conduct monitoring programmes which include carrying out blood tests on the flocks and testing samples of feed ingredients. PPD officers will also randomly select and inspect 300 eggs once a week to ensure that they are fresh and clean before distribution for sale. With these elaborate criteria, consumers will know that eggs bearing the SQES logo are of a premium quality that sets them apart from the rest.
6. There are currently seven major layer farms in our Agrotechnology Parks with an annual production of some 320 million eggs, which makes up 30% of our total consumption. This is by no means a small production amount given our land constraints.

ktk19990205b

7. Singapore would do well to contribute its own supply of fresh and quality produce. It is gratifying to note that five out of the seven local egg producers are able to meet the requirements of the Code to join the SQES. The official logo carried by the eggs from these farms will accord them the mark of freshness and quality, making them more appealing to consumers.
  
8. Eggs are a source of nutritious food that most of us enjoy eating. In terms of numbers, each Singaporean consumes an average of 270 eggs a year. The fact that the price of eggs has not increased much for the past twenty years, has been made possible by efficiencies in egg production technology and the application of the latest poultry farming methods promoted by PPD.
  
9. In their continuing effort to improve production technique and the quality of eggs, three egg producers, led by staff from PPD, went on a study trip last month to Northern Australia to examine egg treatment and storage techniques. They have found that the technology used by our Northern Australian counterparts may be adopted in Singapore due to our climatic similarity.
  
10. I have been told that the egg producers are exploring the feasibility of washing and oiling the eggs before they are made available on the shelves. This technique will help preserve the freshness of eggs over a longer period. Singapore consumers can therefore look forward to having better quality eggs.
  
11. We are a country that is highly dependent on external sources for our supply of farm produce. There is a challenge for us to increase our self-sufficiency to ensure a continuous supply of wholesome and quality produce. With the implementation of the SQES today, we are taking another step in promoting our own local quality produce.
  
12. At this point, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Management of NTUC FairPrice for leading the way in supporting another local, fresh, quality produce. May I wish the local farming industry a thriving success as they continue to produce supplies of fresh food to Singapore despite our limited land constraints. Last but not least, I would like to extend my congratulations to the five egg producers who will be receiving their SQES certificates this morning. Thank you.