# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 519**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 06)**

**Mrs C Dudley (ACDP) to ask the Minister of Health:**

(1) Whether he is aware of the health concerns expressed by a certain person (name and details furnished);

(2) whether his department conducted an investigation in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

###### NW575E

**REPLY:**

(1) Yes. The concerns were received and acknowledged by the Ministry of Health. A further acknowledgement and assurance of the fact that the concern is being attended to was done by the Chief Directorate: Environmental Health and Port Health Services on the 08th of February 2016 to the complainant.

(2) Yes. The Department of Health conducted an investigation. The Department of Agriculture which is responsible for conducting chemical analysis for a range of chemical residues in food products (poultry, hens, eggs, bovine, ovine, porcine, etc.) whether imported into the country or produced inland, was engaged.

Food samples were taken by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the poultry products were found to be complying to the country's legal requirements and therefore it has been released to the market.

The role of the Department of Health will be to make sure that the poultry and its products are safe for human consumption through required monitoring processes. All Food Premises handling imported poultry products will be monitored. The two departments are working very closely in sharing information about consignments received and the destination for further handling which may include resale, repackaging, processing, etc.

Poultry products are handled, packaged and sealed at the point/country of origin and certified by the local inspectorate authority. All preservatives used should be indicated on the label and only approved preservatives can be used at approved levels (in terms of the CODEX Alimentarius list). The poultry products from the USA are preserved with Acetic Acid which is vinegar and kept under controlled temperature. South Africa conducts several tests on the poultry product including testing for preservatives. Consignments are transported in a sealed temperature controlled container at -18 ̊C and the seal is broken on arrival at the cold storage in South Africa. Temperature control is monitored and can be tested on arrival to see the trend throughout the voyage; a report can be generated to give an indication if there were any temperature issues during the transportation.

Additional tests are conducted to identify if there are any micro organisms in the poultry product being imported into the country. Aerobic plate count process is used as a screening measure. Further tests are done if there is an indication that the meat product is not fresh.

The National Department of Health is of the view that the identified risk can be contained through the normal processes of Environmental Health monitoring activities done by the Department of Health, Districts and Metropolitan Municipalities. Necessary steps will be taken to address any issues arising from the monitoring process. All role players are taking all necessary steps within the South African legislative provisions to deal with all perceived risks.

END.