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# Hong Kong Market Development Reports Hong Kong Fast Food Market Brief 1999

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## **Report Highlights:**

The recent economic downturn has resulted in budget-conscious consumers who are more likely to prefer low-cost food to much more expensive restaurant food. Fast food operators' cost-cutting strategies may open windows of opportunity for foreign suppliers. Despite their long-standing relationships with key suppliers, they are looking for good quality at a good price more than ever before.

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## INTRODUCTION

## # Methodology

The goal of this report is to provide a brief on the fast food market in Hong Kong as well as on future development.

For Hong Kong dollar currency figures, the exchange rate is US\$1 = HK\$7.78.

## **#** Main Findings

Fast food restaurants have been present in Hong Kong since the 1970s. Chain restaurants dominate the scene, with Western and local operators competing for market share.

After 20 years of fast growth, the market is rather saturated and competition has become very intense. However, fast food restaurants are still posting reasonable growth rates. Although Hong Kong retail sales have been hit by the regional financial crisis, declining consumer confidence, and growing unemployment, the economic downturn also means that budget-conscious consumers are more likely to prefer low-cost food to much more expensive restaurant food.

To sustain their market position, fast food companies have focused on business restructuring, particularly on diversifying their income base but also cost cutting. They have also been more aggressive in retaining and attracting young consumers. Therefore strategic marketing is essential. In this respect, Western chains are more image-oriented, i.e. trying to create an "experience" for the consumer, while local establishments focus more on providing product variety and regularly rotating their menus.

The fast food operators' cost-cutting strategies may open up windows of opportunity for foreign suppliers. The international chains already import a majority of foodstuffs from overseas, mostly from the United States. Despite their long-standing relationships with key suppliers, they are more than ever before looking for good quality at a good price.

## **#** Market Access Statement

## LABELING REQUIREMENTS

The Food and Drugs (Composition and Labeling) Regulations require food manufacturers and packers to label their products in a prescribed, uniform and legible manner. The following information is required to be marked on the label of all prepackaged food except for 'exempted items' as provided in the Regulations. Prepackaged food means any food packaged in such a way that the contents cannot be altered without opening or changing packaging, and the food is ready for presentation to the ultimate consumer or a catering establishment as a single food item.

1 Name of the Food

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a) Prepackaged food shall be legibly marked or labeled with its name or designation.

b) The food name should not be false, misleading or deceptive but should serve to make the nature and type of food known to the purchasers.

## 2 List of Ingredients

- a) Preceded by an appropriate heading consisting of the words "ingredients", "composition",
   "contents" or words of similar meaning, the ingredients should be listed in descending order of weight or volume determined when the food was packaged.
- b) If an additive constitutes one of the ingredients of a food, it should be listed by its specific name or by the appropriate category (e.g. Preservative, artificial sweetener, etc.) Or by both name and category.
- 3) Indication of "best before" or "use by" date.

Prepackaged food shall be legibly marked or labeled with the appropriate durability indication as follows:

- a) a "best before" (in Chinese characters as well) date; and
- b) in the case of a prepackaged food which, from a microbiological point of view, is highly perishable and is likely, after a short period, to constitute an immediate danger to human health, a "use by" (in Chinese characters as well) date.

The words "use by" and "best before" in English lettering and Chinese characters followed by the date up to which specific properties of the food can be retained, to indicate the shelf life of the food. The "use by" or "best before" date should be shown either in Arabic numerals in the order of day, month and year (or month and year in certain circumstances) or in both the English and Chinese languages. For specific details refer to the Regulation.

Home Page: http://www.info.gov.hk/justice

4) Statement of Special Conditions for Storage or Instruction for Use

If special conditions are required for storage to retain the quality, or special instructions are needed for prepackaged food use, a statement should be legibly marked on the label.

5) Name and Address of Manufacturer or Packer

Prepackaged food shall be legibly marked or labeled with the full name and address of the manufacturer or packer, except under the following situations:

a) The package is marked with an indication of the country of origin and the name and address of the distributor or brand owner in Hong Kong, and the address of the manufacturer or packer of the food in its country of origin has been submitted in writing to the Director of Health.

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b) The package is marked or labeled with an indication of its country of origin and with a code marking identifying the manufacturer or packer in that country and particulars of the code marking and of the manufacturer have been submitted in writing to the Director of Health.

6) Count, Weight or Volume

The food label should include the numerical count or net weight or net volume of the food.

7) Appropriate Language

The marking or labeling of prepackaged food can be in either the English or the Chinese language or in both languages. If both the English and Chinese languages are used in the labeling or marking of prepackaged food, the name of the food and the list of ingredients shall appear in both languages.

**Exempt from labeling regulations:** Individually wrapped confectionery products and preserved fruits intended for sale as a single item; Prepackaged foods for sale to catering establishment for immediate consumption and those containing more than 1.2 percent alcohol by volume.

Under the amended Food and Drugs (Composition and Labeling) Regulations, it is illegal to sell any food after its "use by" date. Furthermore, any person who, other than the food manufacturer or packer or without their written authorization, removes or obliterates any information on the label required under these regulations also commits an illegal act.

#### **IMPORT DUTIES**

Hong Kong is a free port which does not impose any import tariffs on products with the exception of four dutiable products: liquor, tobacco products, hydrocarbon oils and methyl alcohol. Local importers have to apply for a licence from the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department for the importation of dutiable commodities. In addition, a licenced importer has to apply for a permit for each and every consignment. The current duties are as follows:

Cigarettes per 1000 sticks US\$98.45 Cigars per kg US\$126.74

Beer & liquor with less than 30% alcohol: 30% Liquor with more than 30% alcohol: 100%

All wines: 60%

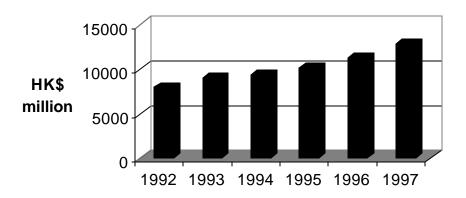
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## INDUSTRY STRUCTURE - AN OVERVIEW

# The fast food industry (in Hong Kong sometimes referred to as QSR - quick service restaurants) has over the past two decades constituted one of the fastest growing business sectors in Hong Kong.

# Between 1980 and 1997, the industry's total sales grew from less than HK\$500 million to HK\$12.9 billion. During the same period, the number of fast food restaurants in Hong Kong expanded from 377 to almost 1,500. (The total number of food service establishments in Hong Kong is about 7,000).

Fast Food Industry Revenues 1992 - 1997



Source: Hong Kong Census and Statistics

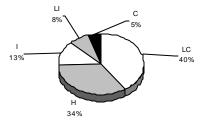
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## INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

- # Fast food operations in Hong Kong include international chains and local chains.
- # The international fast food chains have been operating in Hong Kong since the late 1970s. Some re-entered the market in the late eighties/early nineties, following earlier failed efforts. Most of them have successfully expanded through franchising.
  - @ These Western-style restaurants cover three major segments:
  - Hamburger restaurants
  - Chicken restaurants
  - Pizza stores.
- # The large franchised local chains, which offer a mix of Chinese and international cuisine, started in the 1960s.

  They have grown rapidly over the past ten years, and now compete with the international chains for market share.
- # The market shares estimated to be held by the industry's individual segments are depicted below.

Hong Kong Fast Food Industry Structure



- LC Local Chains
- H International Chains (Hamburger Segment)
- I International Chains (Italian/Pizza Segment)
- LI -Local independent stores (eateries, noodle shops)
- C International Chains (Chicken Segment)

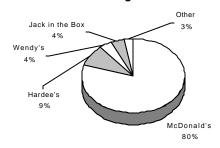
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## HAMBURGER CHAINS

# McDonald's, which has been present since 1975, is the dominant hamburger chain, followed by Hardee's, Wendy's and Jack in the Box.

- McDonald's was operating 144 stores in Hong Kong in 1997, each of them performing about 1 million transactions per year. Half of the outlets had come on stream during the previous four years.
- # Owing to Hong Kong's busy lifestyles and the importance that is attached to convenience and speed of service, McDonald's sales concepts have been brought to perfection in Hong Kong. The city's 6.4 million people have enjoyed the biggest per capita consumption of McDonald's hamburgers in the world. Presently, 16 of the 25 busiest McDonald's stores worldwide are located in Hong Kong. Despite the impressive growth rate, the company believes the market for McDonald's products in Hong Kong has not reached saturation yet.
- # Hardee's, which operates 22 outlets, offers a wider range of food on its menu, including some chicken items.
- # Wendy's and Jack in the Box are also important players, although their share of the market is relatively low.

#### Hong Kong Fast Food Restaurants - Hamburger Segment



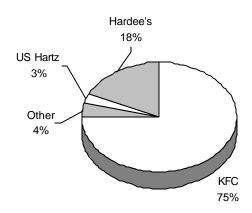
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## CHICKEN FAST FOOD

# KFC, owned by Birdland (Hong Kong) Limited, is the market leader in this segment, currently operating 23 outlets. Its share of the chicken fast food market is about 75%. KFC's philosophy, which is to provide complete meals including side items, salad etc., has proved popular with Hong Kong Chinese customers.

# The American company US Hartz is a major recent entrant, opening its first store in Hong Kong in September 1997. Owned by Coyden Foods and Beverages, which in Hong Kong also controls Wendy's, the company specializes in chicken food but also ice-cream, puddings, and cakes.

### Hong Kong Fast Food Restaurants - Chicken Segment



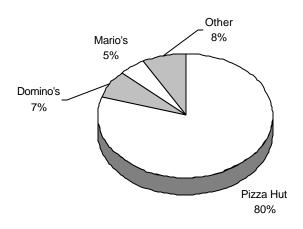
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## ITALIAN/PIZZA SEGMENT

# Pizza Hut, established in Hong Kong in 1981, controls 80% of the pizza market in Hong Kong. The company also sells pasta and sandwiches, and modifies some of its products to meet local tastes.

- # Domino's Pizza introduced the concept of pizza delivery to Hong Kong at the end of the 1980s. The 17 outlets it currently operates in Hong Kong are take-away only.
- # Mario's is another important player, but had to close down some outlets recently.

# Hong Kong Fast Food Restaurants - Italian/Pizza Segment



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#### LOCAL CHINESE CHAINS

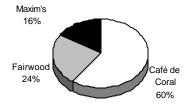
# The top three Chinese-style fast food chains in Hong Kong are Café de Coral, Maxim's and Fairwood. Together they control over 40% of Hong Kong's fast food market.

- # Café de Coral opened in the late 1960s as a Chinese restaurant, and later became a pioneer in applying the concept of fast food to Chinese cuisine. Its standard menus are a combination of 250 varieties of Western food items with 350 Chinese dishes which are rotated on a weekly basis. The company operated 115 fast food restaurants in Hong Kong in 1997.
  - © Fairwood restaurants are overall quite similar to Café de Coral. Fairwood runs about 100 branches in Hong Kong. However, the chain's operations have in the last 3-4 years consistently produced a loss.
  - @ Maxim's operates about 60 outlets in Hong Kong.
- # Over the past years, however, the market shares held by these three operators have been gradually shrinking. Young customers in particular have increasingly been attracted to American-style fast food such as burgers and French fries.

Chain	1995 Market Share	1997 Market Share
Café De Coral	25%	24.1%
Fairwood	13%	9.6%
Maxim's	12%	6.6%

Source: ESCL





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## LOCAL INDEPENDENT STORES

# Hong Kong has a huge base of individual fast food corner stores and noodle shops providing a mix of Western and Chinese fast food. Typically the shops are owned and managed by a couple, and offer low-cost meals.

- <sup>@</sup> The independent stores are estimated to account for about 8% of fast food sales in Hong Kong.
- Typically the food ingredients used in these restaurants are of low price and correspondingly low quality.

Category	Chinese Offering	Western Offering
Food	Rice noodle soup Congee Soup Fried noodles/vegetables/tofu Dumplings (steamed & fried) Fried vegetables Egg rolls Soya bean (steamed/fried) Rice + meat/fish/poultry (fried)	Egg/ham sandwiches Toast Fried ham/bacon Hamburgers Fried eggs
Beverages	Chinese tea Soybean milk Soft drinks	Milk coffee Milk tea Beer

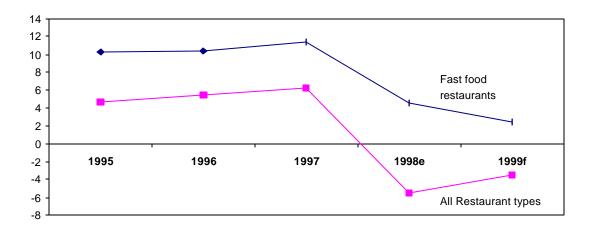
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## CONSUMPTION LEVELS

# After almost twenty years of persistently high growth rates, the Hong Kong fast food market started experiencing saturation.

- Wonetheless, compared with the overall food service sector, fast food restaurants have been weathering the crisis relatively well. While the average Hong Kong consumer spends about HK\$100 per visit to a Chinese restaurant, the figure is only HK\$26 for most fast food stores. The obvious concern for many fast food operators is that amidst growing unemployment and slumping retail sales, some consumers may start to avoid eating out.
- # Sales in 1997 were still encouraging, but growth slowed down significantly in 1998, with further decline in revenues anticipated in the near term.

### Hong Kong Fast Food Industry Growth (in %)



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## **DIVERSIFICATION**

# One of the strategies used by Hong Kong fast food companies to alleviate the near-saturation market pressures has been to diversify into the food service industry. The local Chinese chains have been very successful in setting up specialty restaurants with a more upmarket edge.

- # Café de Coral introduced two new restaurant chains to the Hong Kong market: the largely Western-style Spaghetti House, and the Chinese retro, turn-of-the-century-style Ah Yee Leng Tong. Both chains have expanded rapidly since their inception. Although in terms of sales they have recently been suffering along with the rest of the catering industry, they have long become household names in Hong Kong.
- # In the fall of 1997, Café de Coral opened its first Bravo restaurant, which it hopes to differentiate from competitors by developing it into a chain of "mid-market, cosmopolitan-style boutique café restaurants". More branches are expected to be opened over the next 3 to 5 years.
- # Café de Coral and Fairwood also run institutional catering outlets.
- # Hong Kong fast food restaurants have also tried to diversify their product range. These efforts have included development of new, localized products (Fairwood starting marketing a rice burger, i.e. rice shaped into patties surrounding a mix of meats and vegetables), but some of them went further: Wendy's, for instance, has recently introduced lunch and dinner buffet menus.

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## **COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT**

The following table reflects the current market positioning of major fast food operators in Hong Kong, as well as their recent expansion record and plans:

	Company	Current Market Positioning	Operation Base
Internati onal Chains	McDonald's	Market leader; still showing potential for growth.	Operating 147 outlets in 1997.  New outlets are added gradually and carefully.  Not reached saturation yet.
		<u> </u>	Number of outlets doubled over the last three years, from 11 in 1995 to 22 at present.
	Wendy's	Cautiously optimistic about near- term future; relying strongly on marketing.	Running 12 branches in 1997; has rescheduled its tenancy contracts and consolidated the operation base to 7 outlets in 1998.
	KFC	Despite slowing sales, near- and medium-term prospects are favorable.	Currently operating 23 branches, planning to run 25 by the end of 1998 and open another 5-7 outlets in 1999.
	Pizza Hut	Sales slowing down in 1998.	Currently operating 35 restaurants and 22 delivery stores.
	Domino's	Sales slowing down in 1998.	Operates 17 take-away outlets.
Local Chains	Café de Coral	Performing well and aggressively diversifying. Expecting to draft up a 5-year expansion plan by the end of 1998.	Plans to invest more than HK\$20 million into opening 12 new outlets.
	Fairwood	Implementing a broad strategy of enhancing its image, improving service and upgrading the quality of food.	Continues to expand operations; currently running up to 100 branches.

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## **DISTRIBUTION**

# Both the local and the international chains have developed sophisticated mechanisms for food warehousing, mass production of pre-prepared ingredients, central ordering and distribution. The distribution systems used by McDonald's and KFC are particularly advanced.

- # These centralized systems have become especially important for fast food operators who regularly rotate their menus to maintain an extensive variety of products (this is mostly true for local Chinese fast food chains). There has also been an increasing tendency in the fast food industry to introduce new and seasonal products.
- # Most of the companies use a central kitchen for preparation of side items. In some cases, the central kitchen also prepares main food items to be delivered to some of the smaller outlets with not enough space for all necessary cooking facilities.

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## **SOURCING**

# Production capacities of local suppliers are not sufficient for providing foodstuffs to the major fast food chains.

Therefore a great majority of the foodstuffs are imported from overseas.

- # Other factors that affect the choice of suppliers have to do with the operators' stringent health and hygiene standards as well as requirements for a uniform size of ingredients etc.
- # Large companies therefore source most of their major supplies, such as meat patties, chicken, eggs, potatoes, tomatoes, onions/shallots and fish fillets, in bulk from the U.S., New Zealand, and to some extent Europe.
  - @ In light of the above requirements, imports from China are largely limited to vegetables.
  - @ Buns and beverages are mostly sourced locally.
- # As part of their cost-cutting strategies, prompted by the recent economic downturn in Hong Kong, operators have intensified their search for reasonably priced sources of ingredients. In some cases they opted for vertical integration: Café de Coral, for instance, acquired (for HK\$13 million) a Panama-based company, Scanfood International, and its two subsidiaries, Scanfood Ltd. and Dongguan Continental Foods. The move helped Café de Coral secure its own supply of ham as well as access to Scanfood's distribution networks for fish fillet and pork chops.
- # The fast food companies' safety requirements also necessitate cooperation with at least two different suppliers for most ingredients.
- # Although the major chains' relations with their key suppliers are well established, the pricing and safety considerations as outlined above may still provide room for new entrants.

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## **PRICING**

## McDONALD'S PIZZA HUT

All meals	HK\$17.8	Supreme Pizza (Regular Size)	HK\$73.00
French Fries	HK\$5/6/7	Hawaiian	HK\$63.00
(small/medium/large)		Vegetarian	HK\$67.50
Big Mac	HK\$10.8	Ham and Cheese	HK\$49.00
Happy Meals	HK\$17	Spaghetti Americana	HK\$33.00
Soda (small/med./lg.)	HK\$5.5/6.5/7.5	Beef Spaghetti in Black Pepper Sauce	HK\$38.00
Shake	HK\$7	Beef Lasagne	HK\$41.00

## CAFÉ DE CORAL

Set Dinner (Rice Dish with Soup and	
Tea/Coffee/Sot Drink)	HK\$ 35.00
Chicken with Fried, Corn, Rice	HK\$26.00
Pork Slices with Bean Sprouts, Rice	HK\$26.00
Black Pepper Beef with Vermicelli	HK\$28.00
Spaghetti Bolognese	HK\$27.50
Borsch	HK\$7.50

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## MARKETING AND PROMOTION

International chains are more keen on image building than their local Chinese competitors but all major operators rely heavily on marketing to boost their sales. Aggressive marketing has become even more essential during the recent economic downturn.

The most frequently used marketing methods include:

## **#** TV Advertising

Despite being costly, these are used very extensively, especially on Chinese language television.

## **#** <u>In-store Promotions</u>

McDonald's campaigns, mostly revolving around Disney toys that are given away with every purchase of a large meal, occasionally produce a consumer frenzy.

Hardee's offers Hardee's Birthday Party Combos for groups of 5 or 10 children.

However, sales usually drop after a campaign has finished, and it is therefore necessary to continuously reassert the company's presence by mass advertising.

## **#** Coupon Redemption Schemes

Coupons usually appear in newspapers and magazines.

## **#** <u>Joint Promotion Campaigns</u>

These involve promotions at supermarkets, promotional events at shopping centers, and also campaigns drawing on a fast food operator's relationship with another, mostly non-food, company: For instance, private car motorists tanking up at Shell can receive free product coupons from McDonald's; Wendy's and Hardee's. Both cooperate with Coca-Cola as well as with credit card companies. Fairwood distributes flyers promoting Benetton, etc.

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## MARKETING AND PROMOTION

## **Target Consumer Groups**

	Company	Target Group	Notes
	McDonald's	Children aged 2-8	Trying to communicate a clear, unique message; sometimes described as the "McDonald's experience"; favorite restaurant for most children in Hong Kong.
International Chains	Wendy's	Young people, especially secondary school students; families	Offers discounts for students, who tend to have a limited budget; also provides summer discounts.
	KFC	Young people aged 15-34; young couples	Attracts adults by providing complete meals and combos rather than individual items.
	Pizza Hut	Families; young consumers	Eating-in very popular with families, especially on weekends.
Local Chains	Café de Coral	Families; young consumers	Popular with all age groups; variety- and product-oriented rather than image- oriented.
	Fairwood	Young people	Currently revamping its image to attract young consumers.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

# As already outlined above, most of the major fast food companies in Hong Kong work with established suppliers. Nonetheless, given the current economic downturn in Hong Kong and throughout Asia, some opportunities may be identifiable. The companies' purchasing department representatives may be interested in cooperating with new suppliers provided it is in line with the company's overall strategies of cost cutting and business restructuring.

# For more detail, please see the Sourcing section.

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#### **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

- # As Hong Kong is a free port, no import duties are levied on foodstuffs.
- # However, other regulations apply, as follows:

A health certificate from the country of origin is required to certify that

- **S** The products were manufactured and packed under proper hygienic conditions as approved by the country of origin, and samples were inspected by a method approved by that country.
- # The local Health Department will conduct sampling and analysis upon arrival of food and beverage shipments. Therefore, appropriate correspondence between the importer and the Health Department is necessary.
- # Details of import regulations can be obtained from the Hong Kong Government, Department of Health at Wu Chung House, 18th Floor, 213 Queen's Road East, Wanchai, Hong Kong.
  - # Also, the Health Department provides a telephone hotline service for import regulations at (852) 2380-2580 and direct facsimile at (852) 2845-0943. Information on the Internet is available at <a href="https://www.info.gov.hk/dh/">www.info.gov.hk/dh/</a>.

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## **CONTACTS**

Health Department
Hygiene Division
Wu Chung House
Queen's Road East
Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2961 8989

## Customs and Excise Department

8/F, Canton Road Government Offices 393 Canton Road, Kowloon Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2815 7711 Fax: (852) 2542 3334

# **Hong Kong Trade Development Council**

38th Floor Office Tower Convention Plaza 1 Harbour Road, Wanchai Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2584 4333 Fax: (852) 2824 0249

#### **Hong Kong Food Council**

1/F CMA Building 64-66 Connaught Road Central, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2542 8600 Fax:(852) 2541 4541

#### **Agricultural Trade Office**

American Consulate General 18th Floor, St. John's Building 33 Garden Road, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2841-2350 Fax: (852) 2845-0943

E-Mail: <u>ATOHongKong@fas.usda.gov</u>

Internet Homepage: http://www.usconsulate.org.hk/ato

#### Pizza Hut

Suite 102, Block 2 Hofai Commercial Centre 218-224 Lau Kok Road Tsuen Wan, N.T., Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2413 3933

## McDonald's Restaurants (HK) Ltd

Upper G/F, Parkvale 1060 King's Road Quarry Bay, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2880 7300 Fax: (852) 2563 12

Fax: (852) 2413 3505

## Coyden Foods and Beverages Ltd (Wendy's Hamburgers, Hartz Chicken Buffet)

Unit A-C, 5/F, Champion Building 287-291 Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2827 7311 Fax: (852) 2827 8456

# Birdland (Hong Kong) Limited (KFC)

3E Hong Kong Spinners Building 800 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2402 5038 Fax: (852) 2785 8134

# Wolsey Ltd (Jack in the Box)

913 Chinachem Golden Plaza 77 Mody Road T.S.T., Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2368 8108 Fax: (852) 2724 3196

#### Domino's Pizza

Gee Wing Chang Ind Bldg Chai Wan, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2515 1038 Fax: (852) 2896 1320

#### Fairwood Fast Food Ltd

2nd Floor, TRP Commercial Centre 18 Tanner Road North Point, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2856 7111 Fax: (852) 2856 1966

#### Café de Coral Group Ltd

5 Wo Shui St., Fo Tan Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2693 6218 Fax: (852) 2695 0245 GAIN Report #HK9086 Page 23 of 23

## **CONTACTS**

## List of Important Government Web Sites and E-Mail Addresses

Department	Web Site	E-Mail Address
Census and Statistics Department	http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/	genenq@censtatd.gcn.gov.hk
Company Registry	http://www.info.gov.hk/cr/	crenq@cr.gcn.gov.hk
Consumer Council	http://www.consumer.org.hk	cc@consumer.org.hk
Financial Secretary's Office Business and Services Promotion Unit	http://www.info.gov.hk/bspu/	bspuenq@bspu.gcn.gov.hk
Economic Services Bureau	http://www.info.gov.hk/esb	esbuser@esb.gov.hk
Trade and Industry Bureau	http://www.info.gov.hk/tib/	
Department of Health Headquarters Clinical Genetic Service Government Virus Unit	http://www.info.gov.hk/dh/  	dhenq@dh.gcn.gov.hk cgs@hk.super.net wllim@hk.super.net
Industry Department	http://www.info.gov.hk/id	industry@id.gcn.gov.hk
Trade Department	http://www/info.gov.hk/trade	dcsm@trade.gcn.gov.hk
Hong Kong Trade Development Council	http://www.tdc.org.hk	hktdc@tdc.org.hk