

**For discussion
on 19 March 2004**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Control of Ice-making Plants

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on the Administration's proposed regulatory framework for ice-making plants.

BACKGROUND

2. At present, operators of ice-making plants are not required under the law to obtain any licence from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). There are no specific legislative provisions that govern the operation of these plants. FEHD has recently completed a review of the need to introduce legislative amendments to regulate the operation of these plants.

SURVEY ON ICE-MAKING PLANTS

3. FEHD conducted a survey in 2003 to ascertain the number of ice-making plants in Hong Kong and to obtain information on their scale and mode of operation. According to the results of the survey, there were five plants for the manufacture of edible ice. Their size varied from 47 m² to 500 m² and their daily average production of edible ice ranged from 300 kg to 200 000 kg. The hygienic condition of the premises and the equipment/machinery used were found to be satisfactory. Two operators have been engaging laboratories to conduct chemical and bacteriological tests on their products and providing the test results to FEHD for information regularly.

PROPOSAL

4. While FEHD's survey has not revealed hygiene problems in

existing ice-making plants, we consider that it would be in the interest of public health to put ice-making plants under proper regulatory control. We propose to introduce a regulatory framework in two phases –

- (a) Issue of code of practice – We plan to issue to the operators of ice-making plants a code of practice for manufacturing edible ice. The code will provide guidance on the cleanliness of the premises and equipment, production and storage of ice, bacteriological standards of finished products and personal hygiene of staff members.
- (b) Amendment of legislation – We will amend the Food Business Regulation (Cap 132 sub leg) to require manufacturers of ice for human consumption to obtain a licence from FEHD. On the basis of this proposed legal provision, we will require licensees to comply with licensing requirements and conditions to be drawn up modelling on the code of practice mentioned above.

WAY FORWARD

5. Subject to Members' comments, we will brief the concerned operators of our plan to regularize their operation and consult them on the draft code of practice, with a view to finalizing the code for issue in June 2004. We plan to introduce the amendments to the Food Business Regulation in the 2004/05 legislative session.

ADVICE SOUGHT

6. Members are invited to comment on the proposal set out in paragraph 4 above.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
March 2004