

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Follow-up actions arising from the meeting on 2 April 2004

Purpose

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene held on 2 April 2004, the Administration was requested to provide information on –

- (a) the estimated number of persons currently engaged in the transportation and sale of poultry, and the number that could switch to the new trades if the proposed approaches of “cold chain” or “freshly slaughtered poultry” were adopted;
- (b) the estimated gross product value of the poultry trade and the Government expenses to prevent/control avian influenza; and
- (c) scientific basis for increasing the number of rest days in retail markets.

Number of persons engaged in the transportation and sale of live poultry

2. There are 78 live poultry wholesalers, 380 live poultry transporters and 814 live poultry retailers. Taking into account the number of workers in these sectors, it is estimated that the total number of persons engaged in the transportation and sale of live poultry is over 4 200.

3. As regards the number of persons that can switch to the new trades if the proposed approaches of “cold chain” or “freshly slaughtered poultry” are adopted, we are not able to provide an estimation at this stage as this would depend on the operational details of the two approaches. Nonetheless, the “freshly slaughtered poultry” approach would allow greater opportunity for existing poultry traders and workers who would be affected to change to the new mode of operation.

Gross production value of the poultry trade and Government expenses on avian influenza

4. We cannot estimate the gross production value of the poultry trade as we do not have comprehensive information on the retail prices of live poultry.

5. As regards Government expenses on avian influenza, we have spent a total of \$246 million for compensation and ex-gratia allowances to the live poultry traders, waived rental charges amounting to \$27 million and incurred operational expenses of \$45 million to control previous outbreaks. Since 1998, the Government has progressively put in place a comprehensive preventive and surveillance programme to reduce the risk of recurrence of an avian influenza outbreak in Hong Kong. The annual recurrent expenditure of this programme was about \$39 million for the financial year 2002-03.

Scientific basis for increasing the number of rest days in retail markets

6. According to our study, the rest day is effective in reducing virus burden in markets. In previous months, the isolation rate of H9 virus dropped significantly immediately after a rest day. At [Annex](#) is a chart illustrating the results that we have found.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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Impact of rest day in retail markets on H9 isolation rates in chicken(s)

