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10 November 2003

The Secretary General
(Attn: Mrs Constance Li)
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mrs Li,

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Follow-up actions arising from
the meeting on 26 September 2003**

At the meeting held on 26 September 2003, the Panel asked the Administration to provide information on:- (a) the latest development of “Kamei” chicken and whether the supply of “Kamei” chicken could be increased; (b) measures taken to maintain hygiene and cleanliness in country park and the toilets there; and, (c) details of the proposed outsourcing of the management of selected barbecue sites. The required information is now set out in the paragraphs below.

(a) Latest development and supply of Kamei chickens

The marketing of “Kamei” chicken is carried out by the Hong Kong Poultry (Kamei Chicken) Development Limited, a company formed by chicken farmers involved in the production of this particular chicken breed. The company imposes farm hygiene standards, proper application of feed, medicines and vaccines, and regular meat quality tests on participating

farms to ensure the quality of their “Kamei” chickens. At present, only 6 chicken farms are producing “Kamei” chickens. Farms aspired to join the scheme must first improve their standards to meet the company’s requirements.

To prevent fakes and counterfeit products, the Hong Kong Poultry (Kamei Chicken) Development Limited uses leg-bands incorporating the “Kamei” logo and a serial number tracing back to the originating farm to identify all its chickens. The chickens are only sold through authorized dealers who agree to adhere to a set of terms covering pricing, hygiene standards and responsibility to prevent fakes. The company sounded out their requirements to chicken retailers and 75 retailers have signed up as distributors. Further expansion of the distribution network for “Kamei” chickens will depend on production capacity on farms and market demand.

(b) Measures to maintain the hygiene and cleanliness of country park areas and the toilets therein

Measures taken to keep the Parks Clean

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) is committed to keeping country parks clean and in good hygienic conditions. It arranges daily and frequent cleansing services at all popular recreational sites in country parks and the public toilets therein. For toilets at popular sites, special attendants are also deployed to ensure that they are kept clean all the time. During the SARS period, cleansing efforts have been stepped up and working hours of the cleansing staff were extended. This arrangement will be implemented whenever necessary. On special occasions such as the Mid Autumn Festival this year, AFCD had also carried out overnight cleansing to restore the cleanliness of the country parks as soon as possible.

The cleansing works are carried out by both AFCD staff and contractors. Since 1997, AFCD has been contracting out cleansing services at recreational sites and increasing number of toilets in country parks. In 2002/03, some 30 cleansing contracts were let. These covered most of the popular recreational sites and country park toilets. Furthermore, AFCD has also contracted out litter collection along beaches and coasts within country parks. The objective is to provide a clean environment for visitors to enjoy the beauty of nature.

Improvements to public toilets in country parks

At present, there are a total of 43 permanent toilets with flushing and hand-washing facilities in our 23 country parks. Another 74 mobile toilets equipped with flushing and hand-washing facilities are provided where permanent toilets are not feasible. In addition, three new permanent toilets with flushing and hand-washing facilities are being constructed in Pak Tam Au Country Park, Sham Tseng Country Park and Tai Tong Country Park for completion by end-2003, early 2004 and mid-2005 respectively.

Over the years, AFCD has been putting in a great deal of effort into improving public toilet facilities in the country parks. With the assistance of the Architectural Services Department, AFCD initiated a toilet improvement programme in 2000 aiming at upgrading 36 old permanent toilets to modern standards. The programme was completed early this year.

In view of the dramatic increase in the number of visitors to country parks after the SARS outbreak in April this year, AFCD has decided to make further improvement to the ventilation and hygienic condition of 20 permanent toilets. This programme is being carried out in-house by the Engineering Division of AFCD. Additional facilities such as extra water tanks, electric fans and lightings will be installed in these toilets. This programme will be completed early next year.

AFCD is also working actively with the Water Supplies Department on the provision of potable water supply to some country park toilets where water mains are not available at the moment. This will ensure stable and safer water supply for flushing and washing.

(c) Details of the proposed outsourcing the management of barbeque sites in country parks

AFCD has been exploring ways to improve the management of country parks. One of the proposals under consideration is to outsource the management of selected barbeque sites to private bodies who, apart from managing the site, can improve the barbecue facilities and provide barbecue services on a fee-charging basis. The sites selected for

outsourcing would be those larger ones capable of accommodating at least 100 visitors at one time, and preferably having kiosk and toilet facilities. The intention is to try out the proposal in one selected site or two before wider implementation.

AFCD consulted the Country Parks Committee of the Country and Marine Parks Board in August 2003. The Committee expressed reservation on the proposal. The Country and Marine Parks Board was then consulted in October 2003. Views of members were divided and no consensus was reached.

To better assess the feasibility of the proposal, AFCD is going to conduct a visitors' opinion survey at country parks. The results of the survey will be available early next year. We will take into account the views collected and the advice of the Country and Marine Parks Board in reviewing the proposal and working out the way forward.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

(LIU Kwei-kin)

for Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

cc SHWF (Attn: Miss Vivian Ko)
SETW (Attn: Ms Jessie Wong)
DHA (Attn: Miss Janet Wong)