

**For discussion
on 17 May 2005**

**Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Subcommittee to Study the Streamlining of Food Business Licensing**

**Proposed Measures to Improve
the Food Business Licensing Regime**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on our proposals to improve the food business licensing regime.

Background

2. The trade has made a number of suggestions to the Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Streamlining of Food Business Licensing (the Subcommittee) to simplify the food business licensing regime. The Administration is open to these suggestions provided that standards on food, fire and building safety are not compromised. Having carefully considered the views expressed by the Sub-committee and the trade, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has come up with some initial ideas on a number of proposals which could be pursued at this stage. These are set out in the paragraphs below. FEHD will continue to consider the other proposals in the context of the Administration's review on the food business licensing regime.

Proposed Improvement Measures

Composite Food Licence

3. There have been suggestions from the trade that a new class of food business licence be introduced to cover generic categories of food for businesses that operate multiple product lines like supermarkets. The concept could be applicable to two broad categories of food, namely, raw food and read-to-eat food. The purpose is to reduce the number of licences required for such food premises.

4. The existing licensing regime has ipso facto put the concept into practice in respect of raw food. At present, different types of raw food, e.g. fresh/ chilled/ frozen meat, live/ fresh/ chilled/ frozen seafood, and live/fresh/ chilled/ frozen poultry, are grouped under one single type of licence. In other

words, a fresh provision shop licence issued by FEHD, together with appropriate endorsement/permission, can cover the sale of these raw food items and application can be made in one go.

5. As regards the sale of ready-to-eat food, e.g. siu mei and lo mei, cooked food, bakery products, sushi/sashimi, cut fruits, frozen confections, milk, and Chinese herb tea etc., we are prepared to consider introducing a new type of composite food licence to cover them. As in the case of a fresh provision shop licence covering raw food, endorsement/permission for sale of the relevant ready-to-eat food would be provided in one single licence. Amendment to the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132 sub. Leg.) is necessary to implement this proposal.

Reduction in Number of Licences Required for General Restaurant

6. Views have been expressed that there should be a reduction in the number of licences required for operating a general restaurant. In particular, it is proposed that a restaurant should not be required to obtain a separate bakery licence.

7. At present, a restaurant which sells bakery products in a separate counter/ portion of the restaurant for consumption off the premises is required to obtain an additional bakery licence. We plan to replace the issuance of a separate licence in such circumstances with a relevant endorsement on the restaurant licence instead provided that sale of the bakery products is confined to retail basis and that sufficient food preparation area for manufacturing such products is provided.

Relaxation of Licensing Requirements with no Food Hygiene Implications

8. After careful consideration, we propose that certain requirements which do not pose food hygiene problems be relaxed.

Lowering of Minimum Height of Food Counter

9. Under the existing licensing regime, the minimum height of a food counter is one metre for the purpose of separating the food room area (including food preparation and scullery area) from the remaining part of the food premises. The trade has suggested that the required height be lowered to 75 centimetres. We find this proposal acceptable from the food hygiene point of view.

Removal of Drip Board from Sink

10. At present, a sink installed in any food premises is required to be equipped with a drip board in order to allow wet utensils to drain away water after washing. High quality sterilizing agents and modern dishwashing machines/equipment commonly used by operators have made the requisite drip board an outdated device. We plan to remove such a requirement from the standard licensing requirements for food premises.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to comment on the proposals set out in paragraphs 3 to 10 above. Subject to Members' comments, we will follow up on the improvement measures as appropriate.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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