

For Information

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

EXTENSION OF THE PERIOD FOR APPLICANTS UNDER THE VOLUNTARY SCHEME TO SURRENDER THEIR LIVE POULTRY RETAIL LICENCES/TENANCIES

Purpose

This paper informs members of the Administration's extension of the three-month period for applicants of ex-gratia payment (EGP) under the voluntary scheme to surrender their retail licences/tenancies for selling live poultry after the submission of the EGP application to six months.

Background

2. On 2 July 2004, the Finance Committee approved the introduction of a one-year incentive package to implement the policy of separating humans from live poultry to minimize the risk of human infection by avian influenza. The scheme provides, among other things, EGP to live poultry retailers who opt to surrender their fresh provision shop (FPS) licences or endorsement to sell live poultry on licences or to terminate their public market poultry stall tenancies. Interested live poultry retailers have to submit the EGP applications within the one-year period from 13 July 2004 to 12 July 2005.

3. As at 19 May 2005, we have received a total of 244 valid EGP applications (or 29.9% of 814 live poultry retail outlets).

Extension of the Surrender/Termination Period

4. At present, EGP applicants are required to cease their live poultry retail business and surrender their FPS licences or endorsement to sell live poultry on licences or to terminate their market poultry stall tenancies within three months from the date of submission of their EGP applications. We note that some live poultry retailers might not be able to meet this requirement within the stipulated three-month period (e.g. retailers whose tenancies end beyond the three-month period after the deadline of 12 July

2005) and hence could not apply for EGP. In order to allow live poultry retailers more flexibility, the Administration will extend with effect from 26 May 2005 the surrender/termination period from three months to six months counting from the date of their submission of the EGP applications. The Administration would further consider the need for further extension beyond this six-month period in case individual EGP applicants have very strong justifications but such requests will be considered on the basis of the merits of individual case. The deadline for submission of EGP applications (i.e. 12 July 2005) will remain unchanged.

5. We will issue letters on 26 May 2005 to individual retailers concerned informing them of the new arrangements above.

6. This new arrangement will also apply to live poultry retailers who have submitted EGP applications but have not yet entered into agreement with the Administration on the EGP as at 26 May 2005. The extension does not apply to applicants who have already signed the EGP agreement with the Government before 26 May 2005.

Conclusion

7. Members are requested to note the arrangements set out in the above paragraphs.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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