

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 24 March 2010**

Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
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Madam Chairman and Honourable Members,

The Food and Health Bureau is committed to ensuring food safety and environmental hygiene with a view to promoting public health and improving people's quality of life.

2. In the 2010-11 Estimates, about \$5 billion has been earmarked for recurrent expenditure in the policy portfolio of "Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene", representing an increase of more than \$180 million over the previous year. Apart from provisions for the ongoing work, two spending areas are worth noting this year:

- (1) 460 million for handling food safety matters, including 12 million for the outsourcing of testing work for samples of routine food surveillance; and
- (2) 4.5 million additional provision for providing fishermen with free training courses on sustainable fishery operation modes and launching a pilot fish hatchery scheme.

Food Safety

3. I will now proceed to the subject of food safety and prevention and control of avian influenza. As you all know, we are working on the Food Safety Bill to ensure better food traceability in the event of a food incident and to strengthen food safety protection. The detailed policy proposals of the Food Safety Bill gained the

support of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene in February and we are on schedule to submit the Bill to the Legislative Council in June. I hope that, with your support, the scrutiny of the legislation will be completed as soon as possible.

4. Meanwhile, the Centre for Food Safety will continue to take food samples for testing at the import, wholesale and retail levels. In 2009, the Centre for Food Safety took a total of over 64 000 food samples for testing, with an overall satisfactory rate of 99.7%.

Prevention and Control of Avian Influenza

5. On the prevention and control of avian influenza, various Government departments remain highly vigilant. In the wake of the outbreaks of avian influenza among chickens at the retail level and in local farms in 2008, the Administration has promptly imposed the ban on overnight stocking of live poultry at the retail level and introduced the buyout scheme for live poultry trade, which led to a substantial decrease in the number of live poultry traders. We have also required all local chicken farms to further enhance their biosecurity measures.

6. With the implementation of these measures, the risks of avian influenza outbreaks have been significantly reduced. We are now examining whether it is still necessary to develop a Poultry Slaughtering Centre previously proposed in the face of high risks of avian influenza. This is mainly about a scientific study on risk assessment and management. Meanwhile, we are conducting a commercial viability study and in this connection, we have commissioned a consultant to re-assess market interest in running a Poultry Slaughtering Centre. Besides, we are also studying the trend of public demand for live chickens. We will consult the LegCo on whether a Poultry Slaughtering Centre should be developed once the detailed analytical results of these studies are available.

7. Madam Chairman, my colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members.