

**Motion on “Promoting a slow food culture”
at the Legislative Council meeting on 16 March 2011**

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting on 17 March 2011, the motion “Promoting a slow food culture” as moved by Hon Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun as amended by Hon Fred LI Wah-ming and Hon WONG Yung-kan was carried. The motion as amended is at Annex. This paper aims to report on the follow-up work undertaken by the Administration on Members’ proposals.

Supporting Local Agricultural Development

2. The Government has all along been adhering to the principle of free market. While the allocation of resources depends on market forces, the Government is committed to providing farmers with infrastructural facilities and technical assistance, in order to assist in the development of agricultural production that is modern, highly productive, safe, and friendly to the environment.

3. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has implemented the Agricultural Land Rehabilitation Scheme to encourage utilisation of fallow agricultural land to boost local agricultural production. Assistance will be provided to land owners, tenant farmers or members of the public to reach agreements on tenancy. Services such as technical assistance and low-interest loans will also be provided when ploughing starts. Over the past three years, AFCD successfully assisted 48 farmers to rent and rehabilitate some 8 hectares of agricultural land.

4. Targeting at market demand for quality and safe food products, AFCD will continue to look for new crop varieties that might have good market potential locally. Upon successful trials, the new varieties will be recommended to farmers. Quality varieties developed in recent years

included organic strawberry, small-fruited tomato, cabbage, watermelon, rock melon, small pumpkin and coloured sweet pepper.

Supporting Local Fisheries Development

5. Regarding sustainable fisheries development, AFCD will continue to promote quality aquaculture species through seminars, demonstrations, training workshops and technical publications. AFCD will also continue to provide technical support and training in order to advance the technical and management skills of the industry.

6. The Government will continue to implement the policy initiative of banning trawling in Hong Kong waters. The purpose of this initiative is to restore our damaged seabed and marine resources as soon as possible for the long-term benefits of our next generation. To assist the affected fishermen, the Government proposes to bundle the trawl ban with the introduction of a voluntary buy-out scheme as well as an ex-gratia allowance for the affected trawler fishermen. We have published the legal notice on the trawl ban in the Gazette on 25 March 2011, and introduced it in the LegCo on 30 March 2011 for negative vetting. The negative vetting period expired on 18 May 2011. We aim to seek funding for the trawl ban, voluntary buy-out scheme and the ex-gratia allowance for the affected trawler fishermen from the LegCo Finance Committee before the end of the 2010-11 legislative session.

Brand Promotion

7. Consumers are increasingly concerned about health and the environment. In general, people of Hong Kong are aware of the benefits of a healthy diet, in particular the importance of eating more vegetables and fruits. As the standards of local production and the control system of local agricultural and fisheries products are more transparent, consumers are more confident of the safety of local products. Moreover, fresh local products taste better and are more nutritious. Therefore, local agricultural and fisheries products are more superior than imported products, enabling local fishermen and farmers to capture market share.

The Government has introduced a number of measures to assist the trade to provide high-quality, safe and fresh non-staple food, such as local fruits and vegetables, to the public.

8. AFCD has been actively helping local farmers to build a quality brand and will continue to implement the Accredited Farm Scheme. The scheme aims to promote good farming practices, raise product standards, help the public to identify safe agricultural products of high quality, and enhance consumer confidence. Vegetables from accredited farms have to pass a quality assurance test in order to ensure that pesticide residues in food meet food safety standards. To date, a total of 254 local farms have joined the Accredited Farm Scheme.

9. Regarding fisheries, AFCD and the Fish Marketing Organisation have formulated an Accredited Fish Farm Scheme to promote the quality and safety of local aquaculture products. Fish farms under the scheme have to implement a set of Good Aquaculture Practices. All cultured fish have to undergo quality assurance tests before they are put on the market in order to ensure that drug residues and heavy metals present in fish bodies meet food safety standards. All aquaculture products under the Accredited Fish Farm Scheme will carry a label for easy identification. To date, a total of 99 fish farms have joined the Accredited Fish Farm Scheme (33 fish ponds and 66 rafts), comprising 19% of the total area of local fish farms.

10. To increase public awareness of local fisheries and agricultural products and to promote local brands, AFCD will continue to assist the trade to promote local products by organising large-scale carnivals and Farmers' Markets at holidays. AFCD will continue to organise FARMFEST early next year to advocate sustainable farming practices and promote high-quality local agricultural and fisheries products. We anticipate that over 100 local farmers and fishermen will participate and the event will attract around 200 000 visitors.

Organic Production and Certification

11. AFCD will continue to promote the development of organic farming, encourage the use of sustainable techniques to control pest, and tackle technical problems on horticulture, soil management, seed saving etc. With the implementation of the Organic Farming Support Service Scheme by AFCD, the number of organic farms in the territory over the past five years has increased from 71 to the existing 164. Quantities of organic produce for market sale every day have also grown from around 2.5 tonnes to 4.5 tonnes, representing an estimated two to three-fold growth over the average production value.

12. Starting from 2009, AFCD has been exploring the development of organic aquaculture and assisting the industry with the pilot scheme of the first batch of organic aquatic products. The products were introduced to the market early this year with satisfactory results. At present, two organic aquaculture farms have been awarded certificates from the Hong Kong Organic Resource Centre (HKORC), and more fish farms are expected to practise organic aquaculture this year. AFCD will continue to encourage more fishermen to engage in organic aquaculture and collaborate with the industry to explore more organic aquatic products and other aquaculture species with a view to offering more choices to the industry and consumers.

13. As for the work of organic certification, AFCD will continue to provide funding to the HKORC via the Vegetable Marketing Organisation in a bid to promote organic production and processing and put in place related certification criteria. The number of local farms and plants that have been awarded organic certificates has grown from four in 2005 to the existing 90. The growth rate has fully reflected the confidence of local farmers and the general public over the HKORC's certification.

Livestock Industry

14. There are currently 73 licensed livestock farms in Hong Kong with a rearing capacity of 1.3 million chickens and 74 000 pigs. The quantity of livestock kept at farms normally remains at 70% to 80% of the capacity.

15. In devising policies on the livestock industry, the Government will give prime consideration to the health of the general public. It is by no means easy to reduce the risks of avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases to the current low level. Our success is largely attributable to the efficacy of various preventive and control measures implemented at the farm, wholesale, retail and import levels over the years. As the risks of avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases are always present, the Government must conduct a detailed evaluation of the overall risks in Hong Kong on a scientific basis. If we decide to enlarge the production scale of the livestock industry without careful consideration, Hong Kong's capability of fighting against zoonotic diseases or other animal diseases may be undermined.

16. The Government will continue to collaborate with the livestock industry, carry on its work on preventing animal diseases and ensure a steady supply of livestock.

Finding out the Source, Production Process and Quality of Food

17. The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) launched the Food Safety Charter (the Charter) in 2008. Food trade associations, food premises, food retailers and other members of the food trade have been encouraged to sign up to the Charter every year. Each Signatory is committed to upholding food safety as the focus of attention in the provision of quality services to customers. To date, 21 food trade associations and 2 052 food premises have signed up to the Charter. Members of the public are able to identify the signatory status of food premises through the Charter certificates and stickers displayed on the premises, in addition to looking up food premises in a signatory list which is posted on the CFS webpage dedicated for the Charter.

18. Meanwhile, the Nutrition Labelling Scheme (the Scheme) came into force on 1 July 2010. All prepackaged foods covered in the Scheme are henceforth required to carry a nutrition label setting out the content information of "1+7" nutrients (i.e. energy and the seven nutrients specified for labelling, namely protein, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, carbohydrates, sugars and sodium). Besides, nutrition claims must also

meet certain specified conditions. Since the enactment of the legislation on the Scheme in mid-2008, the CFS has been organising various publicity and educational activities to promote the benefits of the Scheme and encourage customers to use nutrition labels for making informed food choices and achieving a healthy diet.

Promoting Healthy Eating

19. A balanced diet is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Adopting a balanced diet, doing regular exercise and maintaining an optimal body weight can improve one's health and effectively prevent cancers, hypertension, heart diseases and strokes.

20. It is common for Hong Kong people to dine out. People are increasingly conscious of the nutrition value of their food as well as taste. A study conducted by the Department of Health (DH) revealed that more than 40% of Hong Kong people ate out for lunch at least five days a week, while more than 90% wanted healthier food choices in restaurants.

21. In this connection, DH will continue to implement the "EatSmart@restaurant.hk" Campaign, which facilitates the public to enjoy "EatSmart dishes" at restaurants that display the "EatSmart Restaurant" decal. The campaign has received growing support from the trade and the general public since it was launched three years ago. There are now more than 670 "EatSmart Restaurants" in the territory.

Promoting Healthy Eating in the School Setting

22. In accordance with the World Health Organisation's "Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health", we will continue to encourage the public to improve their dietary habits. In view of the increasing problem of childhood obesity, it is of paramount importance to help children establish and sustain healthy eating habits. DH launched the "EatSmart@school.hk" Campaign in the 2006-07 school year in collaboration with the Education Bureau (EDB), targeting all primary schools in Hong Kong. The campaign covers four key action areas, namely research and evaluation; education and empowerment; creating

supportive environment; and publicity and advocacy. Under the campaign, DH develops and regularly updates nutrition guidelines on the provision of lunch and snacks, which serve as important references for the dietary needs of primary schoolchildren. Training workshops are organised for schools, parents and suppliers with a view to improving the nutrition standards of lunch and snacks in schools. In the 2010-11 school year, over 400 primary schools (including special schools) participated in the major activities of the “EatSmart@school.hk” Campaign. Moreover, a record high of more than 510 000 pupils from over 1 150 pre-primary institutions, primary and secondary schools participated in the Joyful Fruit Day event of 2011.

23. To provide further guidance and assistance to schools in developing a healthier and sustainable eating environment in schools, DH launched the “EatSmart School Accreditation Scheme” in the 2009-10 school year. Under the Scheme, schools are motivated to develop top-down and bottom-up policies and measures on healthy diets. With full cooperation between home and school, schools effectively implement food quality requirements set out by DH regarding the supply of lunch and snacks sold at school tuck shops or vending machines. This ensures that the learning and nurturing environment for schoolchildren are “nutrition friendly”. As at April 2011, 180 primary schools have participated in the Scheme and 22 therein have attained accreditation.

24. Furthermore, in the course of setting the Learning Goals of the school curriculum, EDB has incorporated “Developing a Healthy Lifestyle” as one of its over-arching goals, with renewed vigour to motivate students to achieve by action. In subject learning, Physical Education and General Studies are relevant. For instance, the “Health and Living” strand under the General Studies curriculum at the primary level helps students acquire knowledge and develop skills as well as positive attitudes and values related to healthy eating. Schools can also make use of the school-based curriculum and various learning strategies, such as Moral and Civic Education and Life-wide Learning activities, to promote whole person development. Schools can incorporate the concepts and skills of self-management, striking a balance between work and rest, as well as effective physical exercise, to further help students develop a healthy lifestyle.

Promoting Leisure Tour

25. On leisure tourism, there is an emergence of leisure farms in Hong Kong in recent years. A lot of farms or non-government organisations have been operating businesses of “organic farming”, “farmland for lease”, “fruit picking”, “farm sightseeing” on farmlands, which have attracted the participation and involvement of schools, enterprises, local tours and members of the public. The general public can also learn more about the source, production and quality of food.

26. To make it more convenient for the public to visit local leisure farms, AFCD has published, for the first time this year, “A Guide to Hong Kong Leisure Farms”, and complimentary copies were sent to schools, district councils, libraries etc. In May 2010, AFCD organised a “Seminar on Leisure Farms” to assist the industry in enhancing farm operation and provide them with a platform to exchange views. Besides, AFCD will continue to provide technical assistance to those who are interested in operating leisure farms.

27. Besides, the Home Affairs Department will continue to provide information on district characteristics and attractions through the “Hong Kong Fun in 18 Districts” website. The 18 District Offices have been supporting District Councils to implement measures to promote district characteristics and attractions (e.g. Produce Green Foundation in Fanling and Hong Kong Organic Farm in Yuen Long), so as to enhance the sense of belonging among the locals and to stimulate the local economy.

28. As far as visitors are concerned, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) will continue to promote travel that combines eco-tourism and culinary tourism. Through a targeted approach, HKTB will attract visitors interested in nature to come to Hong Kong. These initiatives include utilising the “Great Outdoors Hong Kong!” as a year-round marketing platform to publicise Hong Kong’s countryside (covering the hiking trails, and the local delicacies and organic farms available for visits by tourists along the trails); arranging overseas media to visit the walled villages in the New Territories and sample *poon choi*; encouraging the travel trade to develop itineraries featuring *poon choi* feasts in the walled villages of the New Territories (for example, leveraging on the

Women's Day celebration, HKTB, in co-operation with the Mainland travel trade, arranged for a group of female travellers to experience Hong Kong's countryside in March 2011, the itinerary of which included sampling dishes of the walled village); and planning to organise a *poon choi* feast during the 2012 Chinese New Year for participation by visitors and local residents.

29. AFCD will continue to assist interested fishermen to switch to leisure fisheries and provide them with appropriate training. The scheme was introduced by AFCD in 2002 to allow fish farmers to operate leisure fishing business at their fish rafts, provided that the mariculture environment and public safety are safeguarded. So far, 37 licensees at 10 fish culture zones have participated in the scheme.

Reducing Food Waste

30. To reduce food waste and use of disposable lunch boxes, the Environment Bureau and EDB jointly launched the "Green Lunch Charter" in February 2010 to encourage schools to use reusable cutlery and lunch boxes and to implement on-site meal portioning wherever possible so as to promote green living through impressing upon students, teachers and parents the green messages of conserving food. Over 300 schools have signed the "Green Lunch Charter". The Environment and Conservation Fund (ECF) Committee has earmarked \$150 million to assist schools to install the necessary equipment for implementing on-site meal portioning. Over 200 schools have indicated interest in applying for funding support. Applications from 62 schools have been approved, of which 36 have completed the installation works and commenced implementing on-site meal portioning in the school term 2010-11.

31. The ECF will also continue to support non-profit making organisations to organise relevant educational activities, such as the "Save Food Project" under which the public/students can enjoy \$1 discount when asking for less rice at participating restaurants or schools to promote less wastage. In addition, the Government is working on a plan to subsidise housing estates, through the ECF, to collect and treat food waste.

Land Policy

32. Separately, the Development Bureau advises that there are about 3 290 hectares of land zoned “Agriculture” on the existing statutory plans. The planning intention of this zone is primarily to retain and safeguard good quality agricultural land/farm/fish ponds for agricultural purposes, and to encourage cultivation and rehabilitation of good fallow arable land. Agricultural and associated uses are always permitted in this zone.

33. The existing town planning system provides flexibility to accommodate the development proposals from the agriculture and fisheries sector. In the preparation of statutory plans, appropriate uses are determined through the statutory planning process to cater for local needs and social development.

Conclusion

34. Hong Kong is a densely populated city with more than seven million inhabitants. This, coupled with the pace of urbanisation and rapid economic growth, has rendered it impossible for us to rely solely on local agricultural products and fish to cater for the needs of the community. The public in general also expects a diversified food supply in the local market to provide them with choices. As such, food supply in Hong Kong is heavily reliant on imports from the Mainland and overseas. Having said that, the Government will continue to promote the development of local agriculture and fisheries industries, leveraging on the advantages of Hong Kong’s natural resources.

35. People’s lifestyle and space for activities are usually constrained by the environment. Although we constantly encourage our people to get out into the nature more often, to relax their muscles and enjoy the fresh air in country parks, some may not be able to afford the time because they have to work hard to earn a living. Nevertheless, we hope every citizen can adopt a suitable lifestyle with healthy habits, a balanced diet, regular exercises, wholesome interests and hobbies, so as to maintain psychological and mental balance and health both at work as well as in personal life. We also hope that our people can stay away

from tobacco and avoid heavy drinking. To safeguard public health, the Government will continue to encourage and help people quit smoking through publicity, education and smoking cessation services, and to educate and inform the public about the adverse effects of alcohol on health.

36. The people of Hong Kong are increasingly aware of the importance of a healthy diet and good habits, and more emphasis has been placed on environmental protection and conservation. Various Government departments will continue to exert their best efforts to promote the work on personal and community health, food safety, environmental protection, leisure tourism, sustainable agriculture and fisheries industries etc., in order that Hong Kong may achieve a diversified and balanced development.

Food and Health Bureau
May 2011

**Motion on
“Promoting a slow food culture”
moved by Hon Sophie LEUNG LAU Yau-fun
at the Legislative Council meeting
of Wednesday, 16 March 2011**

Motion as amended by Hon Fred LI Wah-ming and Hon WONG Yung-kan

That, given that Hong Kong is a culinary capital, but the fast pace of life means that many Hong Kong people can only eat hastily and cannot enjoy food, and health problems have also developed as a result; the slow food culture and movement emerging in Europe in recent years, which emphasize slowing down the tempo, upholding a green and natural attitude of living, advocating the concepts of responsible consumption and respect for food, encouraging the use of local food materials to reduce carbon emissions caused by transportation, opposing genetically modified food, opposing the use of pesticides, educating the public on the hazards of fast food, and conserving the traditional eating culture, are worth promoting in Hong Kong; as promoting a slow food culture needs to start with food supply, sales and promotion as well as education, this Council urges the Government to adopt the following measures in the three areas of agriculture and fisheries, the economy and education, so as to promote a slow food culture:

Food supply –

- (a) to formulate a comprehensive agriculture and fisheries policy, including formulating a land policy for the New Territories that balances farming, conservation and development, protecting agricultural land and Hong Kong’s water quality, providing support for reforming the relevant industries, and increasing the production of local food materials, with a view to raising the self-sufficiency rate of food provision in Hong Kong;
- (b) to enhance the support for organic farming and encourage agricultural land rehabilitation, so as to provide the local community with fresh and safe organic food;

- (c) to capitalize on the advantages of local natural resources and encourage mariculturists to rear quality fish;

Sales and promotion –

- (d) to assist local industries, including helping the organic farming and aquaculture industries to apply for certification, support the food certification industry to develop in this regard, explore how to formulate basic specifications, rules, conformity assessment procedures as well as unified standards and signs for organic food certification to prevent manufacturers from deceiving consumers by passing off the sham as the genuine, promote certification services among the public and in neighbouring places, assist the relevant industries in establishing sales networks and enhance the promotion of quality agricultural and fishery products, so as to enable consumers to easily identify such products and purchase them without any worry, and to build a distinctive and quality image of local food materials;
- (e) to promote the combination of eco-tourism and culinary tourism among the public and overseas visitors, such as organizing tour groups featured by Poon Choi feasts in walled villages, holiday farming and tours of organic produce markets, etc., so as to boost tourism and the catering industry and promote local economic growth;

Education –

- (f) to step up public education and promote the concept and attitude of living of a slow food culture among the public, so that members of the public can, through dietary options, protect the environment, treasure nature and develop sustainable dietary habits;
- (g) to encourage the public to find out the sources, production and quality of food in the context of food supply chain, so that they are more able to relish and select food in the course of eating, and to provide food producers with incentives for producing quality organic food; and
- (h) to promote a slow food culture in primary and secondary schools, teach students to reduce their eating speed during lunch time, advocate the values of responsible consumption and avoiding food wastage, and supply fresh and quality food in schools as an alternative to fast food;

Food supply –

- (i) to actively explore, on the premise of complying with modern management and public hygiene requirements, expanding the production scale of the local poultry and livestock industries;
- (j) to encourage mariculturists to rear organic fish and marine produce such as shellfish, and to create favourable conditions for preserving traditional capture fisheries; and

Sales and promotion –

- (k) to actively promote the development of leisure agriculture and fishery industries, and assist the local agriculture and fisheries industries in their transformation.