

**Replies to supplementary written questions
raised by Finance Committee Members
in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2011-12**

**Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health
Session No.: 19**

Reply Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
S-FHB(FE)01	S145	HO Sau-lan, Cyd	139	N/A
S-FHB(FE)02	S147	WONG Yuk-man	49	N/A
S-FHB(FE)03	S143	WONG Yuk-man	49	(2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services
S-FHB(FE)04	S148	WONG Yuk-man	49	N/A
S-FHB(FE)05	S053	WONG Kwok-hing	22	(1) Agriculture, Fisheries and Fresh Food Wholesale Markets

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)01

Head: 139 Government Secretariat: Subhead (No. & title):
Food and Health Bureau
(Food Branch)

Question Serial No.

S145

Programme:

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Please provide the respective amounts of resources actually used in 2009-10 and 2010-11 and to be reserved for 2011-12 by the Food and Health Bureau (Food Branch) and the department under its purview for the following items, as well as the contents and policy objectives of the activities of the Bureau and its department:

- (a) expenditure on Mainland duty visits, exchanges and meetings by local officials, as well as the ranks and number of local officials involved (please list by administrative regions at the provincial level and by cities for Guangdong Province);
- (b) expenditure on exchanges, entertainment and meetings in Hong Kong with Mainland officials and departments, as well as the ranks and number of local and Mainland officials involved (please list by administrative regions at the provincial level and by cities for Guangdong Province);
- (c) expenditure on overseas duty visits, exchanges and meetings (including those in Taiwan and Macao) attended by local officials, as well as the ranks and number of local officials involved (please list by continents and countries/regions); and
- (d) expenditure on exchanges, entertainment and meetings in Hong Kong with overseas officials and departments (including those of Taiwan and Macao), as well as the ranks and number of local and overseas officials involved (please list by continents and countries/regions).

Asked by : Hon. HO Sau-lan, Cyd

Reply :

The expenditure incurred by the Food and Health Bureau (Food Branch) (FHB(Food Branch)), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Government Laboratory (GL) under the purview of FHB(Food Branch) in 2009-10 and 2010-11, and the estimates for 2011-12 for duty visits, exchanges, entertainment and meetings with Mainland and overseas officials are provided at the **Annex**.

The activities set out at the **Annex**, which were normally led by the Secretary for the Food and Health / senior directorate officers, professional staff and other relevant subject officers, mainly comprised working meetings, study visits, exchange programmes, official signing ceremonies and international conferences. The primary objectives of these activities are to strengthen collaboration with our overseas and Mainland counterparts and exchange expert views on subjects under Food and Health Bureau's portfolio. Examples and the key objectives of the visits are provided in the table below –

Bureau/ Department	Examples of the Activities	Policy Objectives of the Activities
FHB (Food Branch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meetings with State General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) to discuss issues on setting standards for pesticide residues in food and brief AQSIQ on the Food Safety Bill; - the Sino-European Food Safety Cooperation Forum in Shanghai; - APEC's 1st Ministerial Meeting on Food Security in Niigata, Japan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to keep abreast of and exchange views on the latest development of food safety issues; - to facilitate international and regional cooperation in food safety.
AFCD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meetings with Mainland counterparts on health, animal and plant quarantine and food safety control; - study visit to Harbin Veterinary Research Institute Laboratory and Animal Health Centre; - the International Symposium on Avian Influenza in USA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to keep abreast of the latest development of aquatic / organic fish farms; - to facilitate the sharing of operational experience between AFCD and its counterparts in the Mainland and overseas countries on subjects such as conservation of Chinese White Dolphins; animal health and plant quarantine and food safety control, etc.; - to enhance international and regional exchange and cooperation in controlling Avian Influenza, rabies and other zoonotic diseases.
FEHD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Global Meeting of the International Food Safety Authorities Network in Abu Dhabi; - expert group meetings on pesticide residues in food in Beijing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to keep abreast of the latest development of subjects under FEHD's portfolio such as environmental hygiene, rodent and pest surveillance and control, market planning and management, incineration, cremation and columbarium facilities, etc.
GL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meetings with counterparts from the Mainland, Macau, international bodies and regional specialised bodies; - general assemblies and international symposiums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to keep abreast of and exchange views on the latest scientific development of testing and metrology; - to strengthen collaboration with overseas and Mainland counterparts and exchange expert views on subjects under GL's scientific portfolio; - to ensure harmonisation of chemical and bioanalytical measurements and standards with other countries/economies.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ Mrs Marion LAI

Post Title _____ Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)

Date _____ 31.3.2011

**Summary of Duty visits, Exchanges and Meetings with Mainland and Overseas Authorities
for Food and Health Bureau (Food Branch) and Departments under its Purview**

Activities	2009-10 Expenditure (\$m)	2010-11 Expenditure (\$m)	2011-12 Estimate (\$m)
Food and Health Bureau (Food Branch)			
(a) Local officials' duty visits, exchanges and meetings in the Mainland (including Beijing, Donggan, Guangzhou, Jilin, Panyu, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Yangjiang, Zhuhai, etc.)	0.185	0.256	0.200
(b) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with Mainland officials and authorities within Hong Kong (including Guangdong Province, Shenzhen, etc.)	0.019	0.016	0.018
(c) Local officials' overseas duty visits, exchanges and meetings (including Australia, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Macau, Philippines, Singapore, Switzerland, UK, USA, etc.)	1.042	1.028	1.100
(d) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with overseas officials and authorities within Hong Kong (including Israel, Singapore, Taiwan, USA, etc.)	0.010	0.006	0.008
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department			
(a) Local officials' duty visits, exchanges and meetings in the Mainland (including Beijing, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Harbin, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Sichuan, Wuhan, Zhuhai, etc.)	0.731	0.390	0.560
(b) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with Mainland officials and authorities within Hong Kong (including Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, etc.)	0.017	0.007	0.012
(c) Local officials' overseas duty visits, exchanges and meetings (including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Doha, USA, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, etc.)	1.686	2.125	1.900
(d) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with overseas officials and authorities within Hong Kong (including Singapore and Taiwan)	–	0.004	0.002

Activities	2009-10 Expenditure (\$m)	2010-11 Expenditure (\$m)	2011-12 Estimate (\$m)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department			
(a) Local officials' duty visits, exchanges and meetings in the Mainland (including Beijing, Dongguan, Enping, Guangzhou, Hainan, Nanjing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Shaoguan, Shunde, Xian, Xinhui, Yangjiang, Zhangjiang, Zengcheng, , Zhuhai, etc.)	0.579	0.814	2.000* (* It is estimated that the overall expenditure on duty visits to the Mainland and overseas, and meeting with Mainland and overseas officials in Hong Kong in 2011-12 will be comparable to the expenditure level in 2010-11)
(b) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with Mainland officials and authorities within Hong Kong (including Guangdong Province, Shenzhen, etc.)	0.009	0.005	
(c) Local officials' overseas duty visits, exchanges and meetings (including Abu Dhabi, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Philippines, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, USA, Macao, etc.)	1.151	1.173	
(d) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with overseas officials and authorities within Hong Kong (including UK, Macao, etc.)	0.007	0.016	
Government Laboratory (under Food Policy Area)			
(a) Local officials' duty visits, exchanges and meetings in the Mainland (including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Henan, Guangzhou, Zhuhai, etc.)	0.166	0.128	0.125
(b) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with Mainland officials and authorities within Hong Kong	–	–	–
(c) Local officials' overseas duty visits, exchanges and meetings (including Brazil, Kuala Lumpur, London, Macau, Makati City, Melbourne, Pattaya, Singapore, Sweden, etc.)	0.217	0.195	0.246
(d) Exchanges, entertainment and meetings with overseas officials and authorities within Hong Kong	–	–	–

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2011-12

Reply Serial No.

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)02

Head: 49 Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

S147

Programme:

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Regarding the manpower of Health Inspectors (HIs) to cope with the work of following up hygiene matters of restaurants, please advise on:

- (a) the percentage of the number of cases investigated by HIs at the scene in the total number of complaint cases received by telephone from the public in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants;
- (b) the average time required for HIs to arrive at the scene after receiving complaints by telephone from the public in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants;
- (c) the respective number of cases in which HIs arrived at the scene after receiving complaints by telephone from the public in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants and the respective percentage of the number of such cases in the total number of complaint cases, to be set out according to the time required for HIs to arrive at the scene (expressed in 5-minute intervals, i.e. 0 to 5 minutes, 6 to 10 minutes, 11 to 15 minutes, etc.);
- (d) whether the Department can, in accordance with the operational manual, refuse to send HIs to the scene on grounds of "insufficient manpower" or "avoidance of disputes with the restaurant", as it was reported that the Department had refused to send HIs to the restaurant concerned citing the above two grounds;
- (e) whether the Department had acted in accordance with the operational manual in instructing a complainant to take away the food in question (e.g food containing foreign substances) and leave the scene before the Department arranged time for processing on grounds of "insufficient manpower", as it was reported that the Department had issued such instruction to the complainant concerned;
- (f) how the Department can prevent their staff from not observing the operational manual if the replies to (d) and (e) are no;
- (g) whether the HI grade is understaffed as per the evaluation of the Department, and how the Department evaluates the staffing situation; and
- (h) the relevant estimates of expenditure involved in 2011-12 in respect of the manpower arrangement of HIs to cope with the work of following up hygiene matters of restaurants.

Please reply in the above order one by one.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Yuk-man

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows-

- (a) All complaints (including those lodged through telephone calls) in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants are investigated by Health Inspectors (HIs) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and they are required to conduct inspection of the restaurants concerned.
- (b)&(c) HIs will investigate complaints related to hygiene matters posing imminent threat to public health (such as food poisoning cases) immediately, and inspection of the restaurants concerned will be conducted as soon as practicable. Investigation of complaints on other hygiene matters, such as dirty toilets, dirty utensils, emission of oily fume would be conducted within six working days. There are no statistics on the time taken by HIs to arrive at the scene after receiving such complaints by telephone.
- (d)&(e) According to FEHD's operational procedures, HIs should investigate all complaints received on hygiene matters against restaurants and cannot refuse to conduct inspection of the premises concerned. For food complaints received outside office hours, if the complaints are lodged by complainants at home and if the complaints involve presence of foreign matters or dead insects in food, improper labelling, non-permitted preservatives or rusty canned food, FEHD would handle the complaints during office hours on the following working day. If the complainants are at the restaurants where the food is purchased, HIs will advise the complainants that they will arrive at the scene as promptly as possible or, if the complainants so preferred, they may take the food to a designated office for FEHD to follow up.
- (f) Senior Health Inspectors (SHIs) who supervise the performance of HIs will consider reports on complaint investigation to ensure that proper actions are taken.
- (g) FEHD has achieved the 2010 targets of conducting investigation of complaints within the timeframe in the performance pledge. The Department has sufficient manpower to cope with the workload.
- (h) Following up of complaints about hygiene matters of restaurants is undertaken by 299 HIs as part of their environmental hygiene duties. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure involved in the work.

Signature _____

Name in block letters CLEMENT LEUNG

Post Title Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date 31.3.2011

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2011-12

Reply Serial No.

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)03

Head: 49 Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

S143

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With regard to public columbarium facilities, please set out in tabular form the locations of the public columbarium facilities under construction and planning, the construction costs, the work progress, the number of niches to be provided, the estimated completion dates and details of the service operator.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Yuk-man

Reply:

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is constructing a new public columbarium with about 41 000 niches and a Garden of Remembrance in the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery at an estimated cost of \$629.5 million. The construction is generally on schedule for completion in mid 2012.

To increase the supply of public niches, the Administration has been promoting the district-based columbarium development scheme and, in 2010, released 17 potential sites across 12 districts for building public columbarium facilities. The Administration is conducting feasibility studies on these sites and will continue to identify suitable sites in the remaining six districts. The relevant District Council will be consulted before sites are confirmed for development.

Signature _____

Name in block letters CLEMENT LEUNG

Post Title Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date 31.3.2011

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)04

Head: 49 Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Question Serial No.

S148

Programme:

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

As pointed out by The Ombudsman, Mr Alan Lai, in July 2010, the Joint Offices of the Buildings Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department were set up to offer "one-stop services" to handle water seepage complaints. However, due to frequent turnover and shortage of contract staff, their investigation of seepage complaints chronically suffered delays and disruption. The Joint Offices came under fire from the public as a result. He attributed the above problem to the Government's insistence on employing staff on short-term contracts, causing the Government to get caught in its own trap.

In this regard, will the Department inform this Committee:

- (a) of the follow-up measures taken in response to the comments of The Ombudsman, Mr Alan Lai;
- (b) whether the Department's follow-up measures are effective in improving the problem of frequent turnover and shortage of staff (please illustrate with figures);
- (c) of the financial implications of the follow-up measures; and
- (d) of the reasons for not recruiting the staff on civil service terms, as well as the financial implications if such a change is to be made?

Asked by: Hon. WONG Yuk-man

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows –

- (a)&(b) The Joint Office (JO) will continue to introduce measures to address comments of The Ombudsman. For the Buildings Department (BD), most staff working in JO are Non-civil Service Contract (NCSC) staff. When shortage of manpower arises, BD will re-deploy staff from other sections to maintain the level of service in JO. As for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), 81 Health Inspectors (HIs) will be deployed to replace NCSC staff in the JO by phases commencing from April 2011 to maintain a more stable workforce in the JO, and to cope with the increasing number of water seepage complaint cases. Besides, the handling of water seepage complaints has been included in the comprehensive review of the overall strategy being conducted by the Administration to enhance building safety in Hong Kong. The review will examine Government's role on the issue, the feasibility of using mediation and how best to utilise our resources to tackle the water seepage problem. The views of stakeholders will be taken into consideration.

(c) & (d) Deployment of civil service staff to the JO in 2011-12 will involve the recruitment of 81 HIs.
The resources will be met within FEHD's allocation.

Signature _____

Name in block letters CLEMENT LEUNG

Post Title Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date 31.3.2011

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2011-12

Reply Serial No.

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)05

Head : 22 Agriculture, Fisheries and
Conservation Department

Subhead :

Question Serial No.

S053

Programme : (3) Animal, Plant and Fisheries Regulation and Technical Services

Controlling Officer : Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Food and Health

Question :

What are the details and arrangements of the neutering scheme for stray cattle implemented by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department in the new financial year? When will the scheme be implemented? What is the progress of identifying suitable locations for accommodating stray cattle?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply :

Since late 2010, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been collaborating with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and other interested animal welfare organisations such as the Lantau Buffalo Association (LBA) to implement a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) pilot scheme for stray cattle on Lantau Island. The TNR scheme will form part of a multi-pronged approach in managing and controlling the growth of stray cattle population and reducing nuisance caused by the cattle on Lantau Island. Under the scheme, staff from AFCD and SPCA conduct joint operations to locate and catch stray cattle for neutering before releasing them back in the same area where they are found, unless it is against public health or safety to do so. If it is considered unsuitable to release the cattle back to the same area, arrangements will be made to relocate them to other suitable areas.

In 2011-12, AFCD will further expand the TNR pilot scheme on Lantau Island and to consider extending the scheme to other areas such as Sai Kung as appropriate. AFCD will also strengthen its efforts in exploring other feasible measures, including identifying suitable locations for accommodating neutered cattle with a view to minimizing public nuisance and public danger while at the same time safeguarding their welfare. AFCD will continue to involve local animal welfare organisations and keep local communities updated on the progress of the TNR pilot scheme.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____

DR. LEUNG SIU FAI

Post Title Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation (Acting)

Date _____

30 March 2011