

立法會

Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2059/14-15

(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 14 April 2015, at 2:30 pm in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** :
- Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon Steven HO Chun-yin (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
 - Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
 - Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
 - Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
 - Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP
 - Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
 - Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS
 - Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
 - Hon WONG Yuk-man
 - Hon Claudia MO
 - Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
 - Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
 - Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP
 - Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
 - Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
 - Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
 - Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
 - Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan
- Member attending** :
- Hon WU Chi-wai, MH

**Members
absent** : Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP

**Public Officers
attending** : Item IV

Professor Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Miss Diane WONG Shuk-han
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Mr CHIU Yu-chow
Assistant Director (Grade Management and
Development Division)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr YEUNG Chun-hoi
Senior Superintendent (Cemeteries and Crematoria)
Special Duties
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mrs Alice YU NG Ka-chun
Project Director 3
Architectural Services Department

Mr Tony LEE Cheuk-ming
Chief Project Manager 301
Architectural Services Department

Item V

Professor Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Miss Hinny LAM Shuk-yee
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3

Dr Henry CHEUNG Siu-ming
Assistant Director (Inspection and Quarantine) (Acting)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr Michelle YEUNG Lee
Senior Veterinary Officer (Technical Services)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Item VI

Professor Sophia CHAN Siu-chee, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Jeff LEUNG Wing-yan
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Dr HO Yuk-yin, JP
Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment
and Communication)
Centre for Food Safety, Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

Dr Regina CHING Cheuk-tuen, JP
Consultant Community Medicine (Non-Communicable Disease)
Department of Health

**Clerk in
attendance** : Ms Alice LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

**Staff in
attendance** : Miss Carrie WONG
Assistant Legal Adviser 4

Ms Wendy LO
Senior Council Secretary (2) 2 (Acting)

Miss Emma CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

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I. Confirmation of minutes
(LC Paper No. CB(2)1180/14-15)

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2015 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1115/14-15(01), CB(2)1120/14-15(01),
CB(2)1177/14-15(01), CB(2)1204/14-15(01), CB(2)1219/14-15(01)
and CB(2)1220/14-15(01))

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2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

- (a) Letter dated 18 March 2015 from Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressing concern about the attack on a hawker control officer of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") and the measures to be taken by the Administration to enhance the training and protection of law enforcement officers of FEHD in performing their duties;
- (b) Letter dated 20 March 2015 from Dr Helena WONG on issues relating to the penalties under section 52 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) and the enforcement situation of the Demerit Points System for licensed food premises;
- (c) Letter dated 1 April 2015 from Miss Alice MAK on issues relating to the import of food products to Hong Kong from the five prefectures of Japan affected by the Fukushima nuclear power plant incident in Japan in 2011;
- (d) Administration's response to Mr WONG Kwok-hing's letter dated 18 March 2015 regarding the attack on a hawker control officer of FEHD and the measures to be taken by the Administration to enhance the training and protection of law enforcement officers of FEHD in performing their duties;
- (e) Letter dated 20 March 2015 from Dr Kenneth CHAN expressing concern about the handling of unsold food by the stall tenants of public markets; and
- (f) Letter dated 8 April 2015 from Dr Helena WONG expressing concern that some smoke salmon manufactured by Polyfood Food Service Co. Ltd. were detected with *Listeria monocytogenes* and about the follow-up actions taken by the Centre for Food Safety ("CFS") on the incident.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1182/14-15(01) and (02))

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 12 May 2015 at 2:30 pm -

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- (a) Implementation of the Food Safety Ordinance (Cap. 612);
- (b) Dengue and Japanese encephalitis vector surveillance Programme, Anti-mosquito Campaign 2015 and Bedbug Control and Prevention; and
- (c) Measures to enhance training and protection of law enforcement officers of FEHD.

(Post-meeting note: At the request of the Administration, the proposed item (b) above was rephrased as "Dengue and Japanese encephalitis vector surveillance programme and Anti-mosquito Campaign 2015".)

Consideration of an overseas duty visit

4. The Chairman said that in his 2015-2016 Budget Speech, the Financial Secretary requested relevant government departments (including FEHD) to implement the proposal as early as possible to facilitate alfresco dining operation, and to consider introducing food trucks to the mix of Hong Kong's existing food scene. In this light, the Chairman proposed that a duty visit to the United States be conducted by the Panel in September 2015 to obtain first-hand information on its regulation of food truck operations (including licensing requirements, mode of operation and food safety and environmental hygiene issues), as well as to exchange views with the relevant government organizations and parties on the operation of food trucks.

5. The Chairman further advised that New York City and San Francisco had a high prevalence of food trucks operating and they adopted different regulatory approaches to regulate food truck operations. He suggested that the Panel should, if time permitted, visit both New York City (an east coast city of the United States) and San Francisco (a west coast city) to understand their experience about food truck operations during the coming summer recess. To facilitate members' understanding of the applicability of the United States's experience to Hong Kong, the Chairman suggested that the Panel could consider inviting officials from the relevant bureaux to join the visit. He sought members' views on his proposal.

6. The Deputy Chairman said that he had no particular view on the suggestion of conducting a duty visit to New York City and San Francisco of the United States and the proposed timing of the visit. Mr Vincent FANG raised no objection to the proposed visit. He said that Los Angeles and Miami could also be considered for the visit as both places had many food trucks operating. The Chairman advised that it was to his understanding that although there were many food trucks operating in Los Angeles, the market

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there was shrinking. He said that as New York City and San Francisco were situated in different states of the United States, members could understand the different regulatory approaches adopted to regulate food truck operations if they chose to visit New York City and San Francisco.

7. Ms Starry LEE said that although she would not participate in the proposed duty visit, she had no objection to the suggestion if it was supported by members. Noting that the Deputy Chairman had proposed the Panel to conduct a duty visit to Taiwan to study its agricultural development, Ms LEE suggested that the Panel could take the chance to study the agricultural development in the United States as well. The Deputy Chairman said that due to different modes of operation, the experience of the United States in agricultural development might not be applicable to Hong Kong. He considered that the Panel could visit Taiwan to understand both its agricultural development and its experience on food truck operations. The Chairman said that to his understanding, Taiwan only had limited food truck business when compared with the United States.

8. Dr Kenneth CHAN said that he would not participate in the proposed duty visit in September 2015. Noting that the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau was tasked to study overseas experiences in food truck operations, he enquired whether the visit should involve the relevant Panel, say for example, the Panel on Commerce and Industry ("the CI Panel"). The Chairman advised that since FEHD would be responsible for handling licence applications for food trucks if they were introduced in Hong Kong, he considered it appropriate for the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene to conduct a duty visit to study the regulation of food truck operations. Subject to members' views, the CI Panel and officials from the relevant bureaux would be invited to join the visit.

9. Members raised no objection to the proposed duty visit and the suggestion of inviting the relevant bureaux to join the visit. At the suggestion of the Chairman, members agreed to request the Research Office of the Information Services Division of the Legislative Council ("LegCo") to prepare an information note on the regulation of food truck operations in overseas places for consideration of members at the meeting on 12 May 2015.

IV. Provision of columbarium and garden of remembrance at Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1182/14-15(03) and (04))

10. Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the proposed project to construct a columbarium and a Garden of

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Remembrance ("GoR") at Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun, as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1182/14-15(03)). Members also noted the background brief prepared by the LegCo Secretariat on the supply of public niches (LC Paper No. CB(2)1182/14-15(04)).

Provision of columbarium and GoR at Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun

11. While expressing support for the construction of a columbarium and a GoR at Tsang Tsui, Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed concern about the traffic impact of the proposed project and the relevant traffic improvement measures to be taken by the Administration to alleviate the additional traffic arising from the columbarium operation. Dr Kenneth CHAN enquired about the detailed traffic impact assessment of the proposed project, including the estimated traffic flow induced by the project.

12. Miss Alice MAK expressed grave concern about the additional vehicular traffic arising from the proposed project and the resultant impacts on the adjacent road network (e.g. Nim Wan Road and Lung Mun road) in the vicinity of the project site and on the livelihood of Tuen Mun residents. In her view, the new access road to be built to connect the columbarium site to Nim Wan Road would not help alleviate the anticipated traffic problem.

13. Mr CHAN Hak-kan was concerned about the connecting transport arrangements from the bus terminus at Tuen Mun Town Center to the proposed columbarium. Sharing similar concern, the Deputy Chairman enquired about whether there were sufficient parking spaces for private cars to meet the demand of columbarium visitors.

14. Mr Michael TIEN made an estimation about the special bus services required to take passengers to the columbarium and the traffic conditions of the new access road connecting the columbarium, based on the expected number of visitors at the peak hour in grave sweeping period. He expressed grave concern on whether the new access road was capable to cope with the heavy traffic flow induced by the project. He also asked how members of the public could access the columbarium on weekdays.

15. On members' concerns, USFH and Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2 ("PASFH(F)2") made the following points -

- (a) a Transport Impact Assessment ("TIA") study was conducted to assess the traffic impact of the proposed project. The study found that the additional vehicular traffic arising from the proposed project would not adversely affect the performance of the key roads and junctions in the vicinity of the project site,

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with the implementation of the suggested traffic improvement measures, and special transport, traffic and crowd control arrangements during peak periods;

- (b) the TIA study included a comprehensive review of the vehicular traffic flow in Tuen Mun, taking into account the estimated traffic flow to be induced by the proposed project and other planned developments nearby. It was estimated that the 16 key junctions in Tuen Mun would be capable of coping with the increase in traffic flow on peak grave sweeping days and during holidays. The Transport and Housing Bureau ("THB") and the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") had also briefed the Tuen Mun District Council ("DC") on the traffic arrangements on weekdays;
- (c) the Transport Department did not recommend the public to use private transport during the grave sweeping period. To meet the demand of columbarium visitors, special bus services would be operating from Tuen Mun Station, the bus terminus at Tuen Mun Town Centre and Tsing Yi Station respectively to the proposed columbarium on grave sweeping days. Tuen Mun DC had been briefed on the relevant connecting transport arrangements. On weekdays, visitors could go to the columbarium by taxi and private transport. Alternatively, they could also walk to the columbarium (for about 45 to one hour) from the nearest bus stations; and
- (d) the relevant bureaux had presented the findings of the TIA study about the traffic implications of the project to Tuen Mun DC and noted their request for robust traffic infrastructural developments in Tuen Mun. The Government would take into account the other upcoming development projects in Tuen Mun in reviewing the traffic infrastructural developments serving the region in the long run. THB would update and seek the views of Tuen Mun DC on the relevant developments at appropriate junctures in future.

16. At members' requests, the Administration undertook to provide, in its paper to be submitted to the Public Work Subcommittee ("PWSC"), more detailed information about the traffic impact assessment of the proposed project, including the estimated traffic flow induced by the project, the estimated traffic conditions of the new access road to the columbarium on peak grave sweeping days and other days, the impact of the additional vehicular traffic on the performance of the adjacent road network and the relevant connecting transport arrangements and traffic control during grave sweeping periods.

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17. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed support for the proposed project. He suggested that a pier be constructed at the northern boundary of the site facing the sea to provide sea transport for columbarium visitors. USFH advised that the TIA study found that the capacity of the associated road network in Tuen Mun West was able to cope with the additional vehicular traffic arising from the proposed project with the implementation of the suggested traffic improvement measures. The Administration therefore had no plan to build a pier at present.

18. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked whether the Administration would consider increasing the number of storeys of the columbarium building for the provision of more niches to optimize the use of the site. He considered that the Architectural Services Department ("ArchSD") should take into account the need for addition of floors in future in designing the building. USFH advised that there might be a need to re-assess the traffic impact of the proposed project if more public niches were to be provided at the site. Project Director 3 of ArchSD ("PD3/ArchSD") said that while making allowance in the design for the construction of more storeys in future was technically feasible, the design and related time and cost implications would need to be reviewed and approval from PWSC and the Finance Committee had to be sought for additional funding to implement such proposal. Mr WONG noted that the fifth to seventh floors of the proposed columbarium would be set aside for incense free niches. He suggested that the Administration should make it more attractive to the public and allow bereaved families to offer water, flowers and fruits to worship their ancestors on these "incense-free niches" floors. USFH said that the Administration would consider the suggestion.

19. While expressing support for the proposed works project, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen cautioned that the Administration should take into account the ancillary transport facilities for the columbarium and the views of the residents living in the vicinity of the project site in considering whether additional storeys should be added to provide more public niches. To minimize environmental impact and nuisance caused to the residents in the vicinity of the columbarium facilities, Mr CHAN suggested that the Administration should consider providing "incense free niches" in the whole columbarium building in another project as a trial. The Administration should also consider providing facilities to enable people to pay tribute to the deceased at another location in the urban area so that they could choose not to go uphill/travel a long way to worship their ancestors at the columbarium.

20. Dr KWOK Ka-Ki asked whether the "user pays" principle would be adopted in setting the standard fee of a public niche, and if so, the estimated costing of the relevant components of the new columbarium in Tsang Tsui to

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be taken into account under the "user pays" principle. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan enquired about the formula for calculating the estimated standard fee of a public niche. PASFH(F)2 advised that when setting the level of fees and charges for columbarium services, the Government would take into account, among other factors, the construction costs of the columbarium buildings and related costs, as well as the recurrent costs arising from the allocation, operation and maintenance of the niches. At the request of members, the Administration undertook to provide, in its paper to be submitted to PWSC, the requisite information on the determination of fees and charges for columbarium services.

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21. Dr Kenneth CHAN considered that the Administration should provide more information to PWSC on the environment impact assessment of the proposed project, including the impact of the project on little Grebes in their breeding season. USFH agreed to do so. In response to Dr CHAN's enquiry, PD3/ArchSD clarified that the one meter thick fill materials to be used for covering the whole site for the columbarium and GoR would come from other local construction sites or public fill.

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22. Ms Starry LEE and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong was supportive of the proposed works project. Dr CHIANG, Dr Kenneth CHAN and Mr WONG Yuk-man enquired about the size of GoR and the number of plaques to be mounted on the memorial walls of GoR. USFH and PASFH(F)2 advised that the proposed GoR was about 4 700 m², of which about 1 000 m² would be used for scattering of ashes. There would be designated walls in GoR for the mounting of about 10 000 plaques in memory of the deceased. The construction cost of GoR accounted for about 12% of the total cost. The Administration would review the need for addition of plaques where necessary. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen requested and the Administration agreed to provide the design of the memorial walls in GoR in its paper to be submitted to PWSC.

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23. Mr WONG Yuk-man expressed support for the proposed project. He urged the Administration to enhance the supply of public niches while strengthening the regulation on private columbarium.

24. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan considered that the communal eco-friendly joss paper burning facilities to be set up in the new columbarium building should be located far away from the main staircase to minimize impact on the visitors. In response to Dr KWOK Ka-ki's enquiry, USFH advised that the other parts of the Ash Lagoon adjacent to the proposed columbarium site had been reserved for other development purposes and would not be used for the extension of the columbarium facilities.

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(*Post-meeting note:* The Administration's response regarding the above members' enquiries about the Tsang Tsui project was issued to members of PWSC vide LC Paper No. PWSC(2015-16)19 on 2 June 2015.)

Supply of public niches

25. Noting that a total of 24 potential sites had been identified in all 18 districts for columbarium development, Dr KWOK Ka-ki enquired about the progress of and the targeted timetable, if any, for the public columbarium development in the remaining sites identified under the district-based columbarium development scheme where support from the respective DCs had yet to be obtained. He requested the Administration to provide supplementary information in writing in this regard. Mr WONG Yuk-man also expressed concern about the progress of the scheme.

26. USFH advised that five projects (including Tsang Tsui project in Tuen Mun, Tsing Tsuen Road project in Kwai Tsing, Wo Hop Shek Cemetery project (Phase 1) in North District, Cape Collinson Road project in Eastern District and Sandy Ridge Cemetery project in North District), which would provide a total of 449 000 new niches, had already obtained support from the respective DCs. The Administration would continue to follow up on the remaining projects with the necessary engineering feasibility studies and TIA largely completed. The Administration would provide the supplementary information as requested by Dr KWOK Ka-ki after the meeting.

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(*Post-meeting note:* The information paper provided by the Administration was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1594/14-15(01) on 2 June 2015.)

27. Regarding the allocation arrangements of public niches, Mr CHAN Hak-kan suggested that priority should be given to applicants who had not been allocated public niches in the past balloting exercises so as to shorten their waiting time for niches.

Promotion of green burial

28. Ms Starry LEE and the Deputy Chairman considered that the progress of the provision of public niches could hardly cope with the rising demand in the coming years. Ms Starry LEE considered that the Administration should contemplate measures to fortify the mindset changes for turning green burial into the mainstream mode for handling human ashes and to step up the publicity to promote green burial. She urged the Administration to establish a registration scheme for the elderly to indicate their willingness to adopt

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green burial. The Deputy Chairman also concurred that people should be encouraged to indicate whether they would adopt green burial, similar to the existing registration system for organ donation. In his view, the Administration should explore new alternatives of handling human cremains, such as turning cremated ashes into synthetic diamond.

29. Mr WONG Yuk-man shared the view that the Administration should step up publicity to attract people to choose green burial. He also considered that the Administration should encourage members of the public to pay tribute to the deceased through websites and to visit the columbarium on weekdays to alleviate the traffic problem caused by a high number of visitors during the Ching Ming Festival and the Chung Yeung Festival.

30. USFH advised that the Administration would continue to step up its promotion efforts and a new television Announcement of Public Interest on green burial would soon be launched in 2015. The Administration would also explore new initiatives and incentives to encourage members of the public to choose green burial. At members' request, the Administration undertook to provide information on the measures taken and/or to be taken to promote green burial.

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31. Mr CHAN Hak-kan expressed concern about the low usage of the services of scattering of ashes in GoRs or at sea. He enquired about the number of usage of these services in the past three years. In his view, the Administration should review the effectiveness of green burial in alleviating the shortage of niches to avoid waste of resources for building the relevant facilities. USFH advised that the Administration was reviewing how best to improve the relevant services managed by FEHD, such as enhancing the free ferry service for scattering ashes at sea. PASFH(F)2 informed members that from 2001 to December of 2014, there were a total of 12 136 cases of scattering cremains in GoRs operated by FEHD, the Board of Management of the Chinese Permanent Cemeteries and the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union. Between July 2007 to December 2014, a total of 4 564 applications for sea scattering were handled.

Conclusion

32. Summing up, the Chairman said that members supported the Administration's submission of the funding proposal for the proposed project to PWSC. He reminded the Administration to provide the supplementary information as requested by members in its paper to be submitted to PWSC.

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V. Proposed legislation for the election of members from the veterinary profession to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1182/14-15(05) and (06))

33. USFH briefed members on the salient features of the proposed legislation for the election of members from the veterinary profession to the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong ("VSB"), as detailed in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1182/14-15(05)).

34. Members noted the background brief on the subject prepared by the LegCo Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)1182/14-15(06)) .

35. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan was concerned that the elected registered veterinary surgeons ("RVs") might put the interest of the profession before public interest. She enquired whether the Administration would consider making it a statutory requirement in the proposed Election Regulation that only those RVs who were Hong Kong permanent residents would be eligible to be nominated as candidates for the election of members from the veterinary profession to VSB so as to ensure that they would endeavour to improve the standard of veterinary services in Hong Kong if elected. Ms Cyd HO, however, considered it not necessary to specify such requirement.

36. Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3 ("PASFH(F)3") advised that the Administration considered that under the principle of professional autonomy, all RVs who were registered under the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529) should be eligible to be nominated as candidates for the said election, except in certain circumstances. The Administration considered it not necessary to include the requirement that a candidate must be a Hong Kong resident in the proposed Election Regulation.

37. Noting that six RVs would be appointed to VSB by the Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH"), Dr Kenneth CHAN held a strong view that the candidates who had lost in the election should not be appointed by the Government to VSB. USFH advised that the existing appointment of the Chairperson and RVs by SFH and the election of six newly added VSB members could maintain diversified and balanced professional views and knowledge in VSB. Dr CHAN asked whether the election would be conducted by an outside agent commissioned by FHB. PASFH(F)3 replied that the VSB Secretariat and Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department should have sufficient manpower resources to carry out the work in relation to the preparation and conduct of the election. The Administration had no plan to outsource such work at this stage.

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38. Ms Cyd HO considered that the Administration should consult the veterinary profession on the voting arrangements before drafting the legislation and provide electors' information to candidates to facilitate their canvassing activities. USFH advised that the Administration would consult the veterinary profession on the voting arrangements. PASFH(F)3 said that a list of RVSs would be published in the Gazette and uploaded onto the relevant website. The Administration would make reference to similar elections in other professional sectors in considering the support to be rendered to candidates in reaching out to the electors. In response to Ms HO's enquiry, PASFH(F)3 advised that the operation and the legal status of VSB would not be affected even if there were any vacancies in the membership of VSB.

39. The Chairman and Dr Kenneth CHAN enquired about the progress of the Administration's consultation work with the veterinary profession. USFH advised that the Administration was consulting VSB and members of the veterinary profession on the proposed legislation which had incorporated the suggestions of LegCo Members. It was the plan of the Government to finalize the proposed arrangements taking into account the views received from VSB as well as members of the veterinary profession, and to table the proposed Election Regulation at LegCo for negative vetting within 2015. At the request of members, the Administration undertook to report to the Panel on the results of the consultation with VSB and the veterinary profession on the Administration's proposal.

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VI. Reduction of sugar and salt content in food (LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1182/14-15(07) and (08))

40. USFH brief members on the relevant work of the Government on the reduction of salt and sugar in food as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1182/14-15(07)). Members also noted the information note on the subject prepared by the LegCo Secretariat (LC Paper No. CB(2)1182/14-15(08)).

41. Mr WONG Yuk-man queried the need for setting up a Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food ("the Committee"). He considered that the work with respect to reduction in salt and sugar intake and the relevant publicity work should be undertaken by FHB, the Department of Health and CFS. He urged the relevant Government departments to step up education work to promote a healthy eating habit from a young age. The Chairman was also of the view that it might not be necessary to set up the Committee. In his view, public education was of primary importance in promoting less consumption of salt and sugar.

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42. The Deputy Chairman considered that the Administration should review the scope of work of the Committee to enhance its functions. He agreed that the Administration should strengthen education work, such as improving the nutritional quality of lunches and snacks at school. He, however, expressed concern about the impact of the reduction of salt and sugar on the catering industry selling traditional Chinese food products which might have high salt/sugar content.

43. USFH explained that some local research studies had showed that the dietary intake of salt or sugar among the general public had exceeded the levels recommended by the World Health Organization. The reduction in salt and sugar intake was not simply a personal choice of consumers but involved the co-operation of the food trade to reduce the use of salt and sugar during the food preparation process. The Government considered it necessary to set up the Committee to strengthen the work in this aspect.

44. Dr Helena WONG said that she had no strong views on the Administration's plan to reduce the intake of salt and sugar by the public. However, she opined that the Administration should first tackle other more pressing issues to ensure food safety, such as the presence of heavy metal and pesticide residues in food, the use of excessive food additives and preservatives in food products and the contravention of food safety requirements by some major catering groups.

45. Dr CHIANG Lai-wan expressed support for the Administration's plan to reduce intake of salt and sugar in food to reduce risks of diseases. She considered that the Administration should standardize the labelling requirement on the salt and sugar content of imported food, so as to help the general public, in particular the elderly, make informed choices to protect their health. She also suggested that the Committee should invite professionals and academia to organize talks to educate the public on how to reduce intake of salt and sugar in food. USFH said that the Administration noted the suggestion.

46. Dr Kenneth CHAN considered that the Committee should devise concrete proposals to reduce the intake of salt and sugar by the public and encourage the practitioners of the food trade (e.g. food suppliers, restaurants and chefs) to reduce gradually the use of salt and sugar in the food manufacturing and preparation process, so as to promote a healthy eating habit in Hong Kong.

47. Mr CHAN Han-pan considered that there were merits in setting up the Committee to enhance public awareness of the need to reduce intake of salt and sugar. He considered that the Committee should take concrete actions to

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educate different sectors of the community to build a healthy eating habit. He was concerned that many people were not aware of the use of nutrition information on labels for healthier choices of food products with lower sodium and sugar contents. He considered that such information should be highlighted in the nutrition labels to alert the consumers. Consultant (Community Medicine) (Risk Assessment and Communication) of CFS advised that the Administration had strengthened publicity work in recent years to enhance public awareness about nutrition labelling, such as organizing quiz competitions at schools. He said that prepackaged food products fulfilling the relevant requirements could carry claims as "low sugar" and "low sodium" in their nutrition labels to facilitate consumers to make informed choices.

48. Ms Cyd HO expressed concern about the legibility of some nutrition labels and was disappointed that the Administration had yet to act on the recommendation of the Public Account Committee ("PAC") to introduce legislative amendments to regulate the legibility of nutrition labels, so as to facilitate consumers to select products with low sodium and sugar content. Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1 advised that the trade was required to provide legible nutrition labels under the existing Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap. 132W). CFS had issued the "Trade Guidelines on Preparation of Legible Food Label" in May 2012 to assist the trade in providing clear and legible information on the food labels. It had also conducted a study in collaboration with the Consumer Council in 2013 on the legibility of the nutrition labels of prepackaged food products sold in Hong Kong with reference to the Guidelines. He advised that in the early stages, upon detection of non-compliance with the requirements of the Nutrition Labelling Scheme in prepackaged food, including the failure to provide legible nutrition labels, CFS would issue a warning letter to the food trader concerned requiring compliance within a specified period. However, after a review on its enforcement work conducted in the middle of 2014, CFS would initiate prosecution immediately without allowing any time for rectification if it identified any non-compliance with the legibility requirements for nutrition labels.

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49. At the request of Ms Cyd HO, the Administration undertook to provide information on the enforcement actions including prosecutions taken against non-compliance with the legibility requirement for nutrition labels of prepackaged food products under the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations since the publication of the PAC Report No. 57 in February 2012 which covered, inter alia, food labelling.

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VII. Any other business

50. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:30 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 September 2015