

立法會
Legislative Council

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by the Administration)

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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Minutes of meeting by videoconferencing
held on Tuesday, 9 February 2021, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 2B of the Legislative Council Complex**

Members present : Hon Steven HO Chun-yin, BBS (Chairman)
Hon SHIU Ka-fai, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, GBS, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, BBS, JP
Hon CHAN Han-pan, BBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, SBS, MH, JP
Hon KWOK Wai-keung, JP
Hon Elizabeth QUAT, BBS, JP
Hon Wilson OR Chong-shing, MH
Hon YUNG Hoi-yan, JP
Dr Hon Pierre CHAN
Hon LAU Kwok-fan, MH
Hon Kenneth LAU Ip-keung, BBS, MH, JP
Dr Hon CHENG Chung-tai
Hon Vincent CHENG Wing-shun, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS, JP

Member attending : Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP

Public Officers : Item III

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Amor WONG Yiu-tuen
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 3

Mr Mickey LAI Kin-ming
Deputy Director (Acting)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Mr Patrick LAI Chuen-chi
Assistant Director (Fisheries)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Item IV

Dr CHUI Tak-yi, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Gilford LAW Sun-on
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Miss Diane WONG Shuk-han, JP
Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr Edward CHAN Yiu-keung
Assistant Director (Operations) 2
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Clerk in attendance : Miss Josephine SO
Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

Staff in attendance : Mr Clement HAU
Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Cally LAI
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

Ms Camy YOONG
Clerical Assistant (2) 2

Action

I. Information paper issued since the last meeting

Members noted that no information paper had been issued since the last meeting.

Action

II. Date of next meeting and items for discussion

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)744/20-21(01) and (02))

2. Members agreed to discuss the following two items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 9 March 2021 at 2:30 pm:

- (a) Result of the public consultation on the proposals to amend Schedule 2 to the Veterinary Surgeons Registration Ordinance (Cap. 529) to facilitate clinical training of veterinary students; and
- (b) Food Surveillance Programme.

III. Promoting the sustainable development of the fisheries industry

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)744/20-21(03) and (04))

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed Members on the latest progress of promoting the sustainable development of the fisheries industry through the implementation of the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund ("SFDF") and the conservation of fisheries resources in local waters, as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)744/20-21(03)). Members noted the background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat entitled "Government's efforts to assist the sustainable development of the fisheries industry" (LC Paper No. CB(2)744/20-21(04)).

Management of SFDF

Application and vetting procedures

4. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung and Ms Elizabeth QUAT noted that among the 44 general applications received under SFDF as at the end of December 2020, 16 applications had been rejected. They expressed concern that the successful rate of funding applications was not high. Ms QUAT said that many applicants had commented that the application procedures for SFDF were cumbersome and the vetting process was overly long. She enquired whether and what measures would be taken by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") to streamline the application and vetting procedures of SFDF.

5. Deputy Director (Acting), AFCD ("DD(Atg)AFCD") responded that AFCD had regularly reviewed the operation of SFDF and rolled out a series of measures to improve the efficiency of SFDF. These measures included

Action

(a) simplifying the application and vetting procedures; (b) enhancing the support during application process; and (c) allowing more projects and equipment purchases to receive funding under SFDF. To streamline the vetting procedures, direct vetting of applications by the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund Advisory Committee instead of initial vetting by a working group first had been adopted; and the vetting of projects of a simple nature or involving funding of not more than \$1 million was now handled by circulation instead of at meetings. Moreover, to encourage the fisheries sector to apply for SFDF, AFCD had simplified the application forms by requiring the essential information only and adopting a simplified format such as fill-in-the-blank and multiple choices. AFCD also arranged individual consultation meetings with potential applicants to assist applicants in preparing proposals and completing the application forms.

6. Mr WONG Ting-kwong said that Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong were supportive of the implementation of SFDF which aimed to provide financial assistance for the modernization and sustainable development of the local fisheries industry. He asked how the performance of SFDF had been enhanced after the implementation of the improvement measures set out at Annex 2 to the Administration's paper.

7. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that following the implementation of the improvement measures, the average processing time of applications was shortened with vetting of all applications completed within six months meeting the performance pledge set for it. Besides, the number of projects approved per year in the past two years was three times of the past average. Since the implementation of the improvement measures, five general applications under SFDF had been approved and two rejected due to (a) similarity in nature of the projects put up by the applicants to other projects already approved and being carried out by other parties or (b) failure of the applicants to provide the required information. All the 10 applications received for the Equipment Improvement Project (set up under SFDF in late 2017 to provide financial assistance for fishermen/aquaculturists to procure equipment to help increase productivity and to facilitate sustainable development) had been approved.

8. Mr KWOK Wai-keung opined that the current pace of processing and approving funding applications was still slow as only 28 projects had been approved since the establishment of SFDF, involving only approximately one-third of the approved commitment. He asked whether AFCD would further review the operation of SFDF, with a view to enhancing its efficiency. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that AFCD regularly reviewed the operation of SFDF to streamline the administration of the scheme. AFCD also met with

Action

the fisheries sector on a regular basis to explore potential projects which were conducive to the sustainable development of the industry. A list of potential projects that might benefit from SFDF had been drawn up and was regularly updated for the trade's reference.

9. Mr LEUNG Che-cheung expressed concern that fishermen/aquaculturists might have difficulties in preparing proposals and filing applications for SFDF. Noting that many approved projects were proposed by non-profit-making organizations ("NGOs") and academic institutions, he asked whether AFCD had lined up tri-partite meetings among the trade and NGOs/academic institutions to encourage their cooperation for making applications for SFDF.

10. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that AFCD had been assisting fishermen/aquaculturists in forming partnership with NGOs/academic institutions to make applications for SFDF. Among the 28 general applications approved as at the end of December 2020, 16 applications were made by companies established by fishermen/aquaculturists, seven from academic institutions, two from NGOs and three jointly made by fisheries organizations and academic institutions/other organizations under the coordination of AFCD. AFCD would continue to organize liaison meetings, seminars and workshops to introduce SFDF to the fisheries industry, NGOs and academic institutions and encourage interested parties to form partnership for making funding applications.

Support provided by SFDF

11. Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Ms Elizabeth QUAT enquired about the funding scope of SFDF. DD(Atg)AFCD advised that programmes, projects and research that would contribute to fostering the sustainable development and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the fisheries industry, with such initiatives bringing benefits to the operations of the local fisheries community as a whole, could be considered, vetted and awarded on its individual merits under SFDF. Indeed, a wide variety of fisheries-related projects that could bring benefits to the fisheries industry (e.g. projects relating to the development of recreational fisheries, pearl cultivation and lobster farming) had been funded by SFDF in recent years.

12. In response to Mr WONG Ting-kwong's follow-up enquiry, DD(Atg)AFCD said that projects relating to ornamental fish (e.g. koi fish) farming could be considered under SFDF as the activities were fisheries-related in nature.

Action

Admin

13. Mr Tony TSE considered it important, in the long run, to attract people interested in venturing into modernized fish farming to join the industry. He asked whether there was an increase in (a) the number of people joining the fisheries industry and (b) the average income of local fishermen/aquaculturists since the establishment of SFDF in 2014.

14. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that in recent years, the number of local fishermen/aquaculturists maintained at a level of around 13 000. The income of local fishermen engaging in inshore fishing was quite stable when compared with Mainland capture fishermen who had to face more stringent control on capture fishery and diminishing fisheries resources in Mainland waters. DD(Atg)AFCD added that to attract people to join the fisheries industry, a project was funded by SFDF to provide lectures and hands-on trainings with the use of the modernized deep sea aquaculture platform to be established in the Tung Lung Chau fish culture zone. Dozens of participants, including young people, who were interested in fish farming were receiving trainings under the project. The Administration hoped that the project could provide new entrants with opportunities to get familiarized with mariculture practice.

15. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr Tony TSE enquired about how AFCD had assisted local fishermen/aquaculturists in developing deep sea mariculture in the Greater Bay Area ("GBA") waters and their response to the development opportunities in GBA. DD(Atg)AFCD advised that AFCD had been supporting the mariculture industry in developing deep sea mariculture in GBA. In 2020, local fishermen/aquaculturists were invited to develop deep sea mariculture in Huizhou, Guangdong Province under the support of the relevant Mainland authorities. An application aiming to provide financial support to the Huizhou programme was being considered under SFDF. As local fishermen/aquaculturists had shown interest in developing deep sea mariculture in the GBA waters, AFCD would convey to the Mainland authorities the trade's aspiration to participate in deep sea mariculture operations in more GBA water zones.

16. Mr KWOK Wai-keung asked whether other projects seeking to broaden the development prospect of the fisheries industry were funded by SFDF. DD(Atg)AFCD responded in the affirmative, adding that SFDF had provided financial support to the project "Study Tour to Oman Salalah and Dubai" under which local capture fishermen (including those engaging in distant water fishing) were provided with opportunities to get familiarized with the capture fishery and its operation in Oman. Some local capture fishermen were exploring the feasibility of developing capture fisheries business in Oman after completion of the study tour.

Action

Other support provided to the fisheries industry

Admin

17. The Chairman considered that the Administration should comprehensively review the existing fisheries policies, with a view to mapping out new directions for the development of the fisheries industry. He asked, apart from the implementation of SFDF, whether any new policies/support measures would be introduced by the Administration or AFCD for promoting the sustainable development of the fisheries industry. Ms Elizabeth QUAT opined that AFCD should continue to render support to fishermen/aquaculturists to facilitate their switching to sustainable fisheries operations after equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills through the pilot projects funded by SFDF. She asked whether any complementary policy measures had been put in place by AFCD in this regard.

18. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that apart from providing financial support to the fisheries industry through SFDF, AFCD had all along been implementing a basket of support measures to help the fisheries sector to switch to sustainable modes of fishing operations, including preparation for the designation of four new fish culture zones for the long-term development of the mariculture sector in local waters and provision of technical support to fishermen in daily operations.

Admin

19. The Chairman noted that project proposals that were in repetition of or similar to the projects already approved would not be funded by SFDF. He expressed concern whether AFCD would review the operation of the Fisheries Development Loan Fund ("FDLF") and streamline the relevant application and vetting procedures in order to facilitate provision of financial support to projects which no longer received funding from SFDF after completion of the pilot scheme.

20. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that while the aim of SFDF was to provide financial support for carrying out pilot projects that were conducive to the sustainable development of the fisheries industry, AFCD would explore whether there was room for provision of financial assistance to project proposals of similar nature to those pilot schemes funded by SFDF which had been proven successful. Applications for projects meeting the relevant criteria could also be considered under FDLF which had an approved commitment of \$1,100 million.

21. Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that she had received complaints from some fish farmers that they had to meet stringent licensing requirements for operating recreational fishing activities on their fish rafts. She enquired whether AFCD would devise support measures for the promotion and

Action

Admin

development of recreational fisheries in Hong Kong. The Chairman asked whether AFCD would consult relevant bureaux and consider (a) amending the Marine Fish Culture Ordinance (Cap. 353) to designate water zones for conducting recreational fishing activities or (b) adopting a separate set of regulatory requirements on mariculture rafts which had been allowed to conduct recreational fishing.

22. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that AFCD had been promoting recreational fisheries through various means, which included providing financial support to projects relating to recreational fisheries through SFDF, promoting fisheries culture and heritage, equipping fishermen with the necessary knowledge and skills in operating eco-tours.

Enforcement against illegal fishing activities

23. The Chairman considered the Administration's enforcement actions against Mainland fishermen's illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong waters not effective. Ms Elizabeth QUAT opined that the penalties imposed on offenders were too lenient. She asked whether the Administration would consider amending the laws to raise the relevant penalties for illegal fishing to enhance the deterrent effect or inviting the court to review the guidelines for the sentencing of offences relating to illegal fishing.

24. DD(Atg)AFCD responded that to strengthen enforcement capability, AFCD had consolidated internal resources in 2020 to set up a dedicated enforcement team at sea. The number of members in the enforcement team and the number of vessels had increased from 18 to 34 and from three to seven respectively, enhancing the mobility and responsiveness in combating illegal fishing. Other measures to combat cross-boundary illegal fishing activities included (a) conducting joint enforcement operations with the Guangdong Provincial Marine Comprehensive Law Enforcement General Brigade, (b) using real-time satellite information to help identify fishing vessels engaged in illegal fishing and (c) keeping in touch with fishermen organizations to get hold of more information on illegal fishing so as to adjust the arrangements of patrols and enforcement operations for greater effectiveness.

25. DD(Atg)AFCD further said that under the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171), the use of prohibited gear/apparatus for fishing was liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction, while the use of unregistered vessel for fishing activities was liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction. Since the implementation of the relevant legislation, the highest penalty imposed had been a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for three

Action

months, as well as confiscating the fishing gears involved in the case concerned. The Administration considered that the level of penalties imposed by the court could serve an adequate deterrent effect. AFCD would continue to provide information on the illegal fishing activities in Hong Kong waters and the destruction caused to local fisheries resources by such activities to the court for reference through the Judiciary.

26. At the request of the Chairman, the Administration would provide written responses to the issues raised by members in paragraphs 13, 17, 19 and 21 above.

IV. Promotion of contactless payment in public markets
(LC Paper No. CB(2)744/20-21(05))

27. At the invitation of the Chairman, USFH briefed Members on the progress of the subsidy scheme launched by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") for promotion of contactless payment in public markets as well as FEHD's upcoming promotion strategy and actions, as set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)744/20-21(05)).

Implementation progress of the subsidy scheme

28. The Deputy Chairman, Ms Elizabeth QUAT, Mr Wilson OR, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan and Mr Tony TSE expressed support for the implementation of the subsidy scheme for promotion of contactless payment in public markets in order to improve public hygiene and reduce the risk of virus transmission through physical contacts. The Deputy Chairman, Mr TSE and Mr Michael TIEN enquired about the progress of installing contactless payment devices in market stalls since the launch of the subsidy scheme.

29. In response, USFH and Deputy Director (Environmental Hygiene), FEHD ("DD(EH)/FEHD") advised that under the scheme, a one-off subsidy, at a flat rate of \$5,000 per stall, was provided to tenants (including tenants of cooked food stalls) in markets of FEHD or the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA"). The application period was from 15 October to 21 December 2020, during which FEHD and HA received more than 3 500 and 450 applications respectively. Among the 3 500 applications received, FEHD had vetted and approved 2 594 applications. It should be noted that some tenants had already been providing contactless payment means on their own without applying for the subsidies. It was estimated that about 30% of the let stalls of FEHD's markets in the territory could provide contactless payment service.

Action

30. DD(EH)/FEHD further advised that market stall tenants were required to submit an application and obtain an approval in principle before signing a service contract with a contactless payment service provider in relation to the provision of at least one contactless payment means. After that, tenants had to produce a duly-signed valid service contract of a duration of no less than two years, and FEHD/HA would conduct inspections to ensure that installation of the contactless payment device had been completed. Thereafter, subsidies would be disbursed as soon as practicable.

31. In response to Mr Tony TSE's follow-up enquiry, DD(EH)/FEHD said that there were about 1 480 tenants operating in HA's markets. With more than 450 applications for subsidies received by HA, it was estimated that about 30% of the let stalls of HA's markets could provide contactless payment service.

32. The Deputy Chairman enquired about the installation fees and monthly service charges for a contactless payment device. DD(EH)/FEHD said that the initial set-up costs and service fees in relation to the provision of a contactless payment device varied under different contract schemes offered by individual service providers. It was estimated that the \$5,000 one-off subsidy should be able to meet the initial set-up costs as well as service and other fees in relation to the provision of at least one contactless payment means for a reasonable period of time.

Promotional activities on contactless payment

Promotion among market stall tenants

33. The Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, Mr Wilson OR and Mr Michael TIEN considered the receptiveness to contactless payment among tenants of public markets far from satisfactory. In their views, FEHD should step up promotional efforts to encourage market stall tenants to install contactless payment devices for provision of contactless payment means for market patrons. Mr OR asked whether any targeted promotion strategies had been devised in this regard.

34. Ms Elizabeth QUAT said that to her understanding, some market stall tenants had reservations about installing contactless payment devices because they did not want to bear the installation and maintenance fees. Ms QUAT considered that FEHD should set up a dedicated team to strengthen promotion of contactless payment in market stalls and to brief tenants on the advantages of using contactless payment.

Action

35. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that since the launch of the subsidy scheme, FEHD had conducted a series of promotional activities on contactless payment for tenants of its public market stalls. The activities held were set out in the Annex to the Administration's paper. FEHD had arranged frontline staff to carry out promotional activities in various public markets and communicate with tenants to understand their concerns and needs. While the application period had already ended, FEHD and HA would continue to promote contactless payment among tenants through various publicity channels.

36. Ms Elizabeth QUAT held the view that FEHD should allow different types of contactless payment methods (e.g. payment by contactless credit cards including "Visa PayWave", "MasterCard Contactless" and "UnionPay QuickPass" as well as mobile phone payment) in public markets to give tenants more choices. She and Ms YUNG Hoi-yan said that some market stall tenants found it inconvenient to operate several contactless payment devices during peak business hours. They considered that FEHD should liaise with the Innovation and Technology Bureau ("ITB") to explore whether a multi-purpose contactless payment device, which could synchronize with different payment systems, could be developed for use in public markets. Ms YUNG further suggested that FEHD should join hands with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer ("OGCIO") to explore whether contactless payment service in public markets could be provided through the one-stop personalized digital services platform "iAM Smart" recently launched by OGCIO.

37. The Chairman shared the view that FEHD should work with ITB or relevant departments to devise initiatives to encourage market stall tenants to use contactless payment means for transactions. He suggested that FEHD should consider (a) providing incentives to tenants for using contactless payment upon tenancy renewal; (b) subsidizing service and other fees arising from the provision of contactless payment means for market patrons, say for a period up to three years; and (c) organizing competitions to promote contactless payment in market stalls. USFH and DD(EH)/FEHD responded that ITB had been exploring with contactless payment service providers to promote a higher market penetration rate of contactless payment means in the Hong Kong setting. FEHD would maintain communication with ITB on this issue.

38. Mr KWOK Wai-keung, Ms Elizabeth QUAT and Mr Wilson OR considered that FEHD should invite contactless payment service providers to offer incentives to encourage tenants to install contactless payment devices.

Action

39. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that FEHD had arranged contactless payment service providers/contractors to visit public markets to explain the service contents and promote their contract schemes. FEHD had conveyed tenants' concerns on service contents and service fees to the service providers. It was noted that under certain contract schemes, the service fees could be waived if the total amount of contactless transactions was lower than a specified amount during the first contract year. DD(EH)/FEHD added that FEHD would encourage service providers to offer incentives to stall tenants and market patrons for using contactless payment. FEHD would also welcome service providers' views on how the promotion of contactless payment in public markets could be further enhanced.

40. Ms YUNG Hoi-yan suggested FEHD consult the Federation of Hong Kong Kowloon New Territories Hawker Associations on the selection of public markets for launching pilot schemes if targeted promotional activities for contactless payment were rolled out. She asked whether FEHD would consider issuing, in collaboration with market stall tenants, consumption coupons to market patrons so as to boost transactions in public markets through the use of contactless payment. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that the suggestion required careful consideration (including who would be the contributors of consumption coupons and which groups of tenants could benefit from consumption coupons) and tenants' cooperation was essential in taking forward such a promotional activity.

41. Mr Michael TIEN opined that tenants of public markets should be requested to provide contactless payment service as a condition for tenancy renewal. He asked whether FEHD would consider adding, upon renewal of tenancy agreements, a new clause therein to require tenants to provide contactless payment service during the next tenancy period.

42. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that all tenants in FEHD Skylight Market in Tin Shui Wai had already installed contactless payment devices. Nevertheless, unlike such new public markets, FEHD understood that some tenants in existing public markets took a relatively conservative attitude towards accepting or applying new technologies. USFH said that the Administration noted Mr Michael TIEN's views and would discuss the suggestion with relevant stakeholders.

(To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman directed that the meeting be extended for 10 minutes beyond the appointed time.)

Action

Promotion among market patrons

43. Mr KWOK Wai-keung and Mr Tony TSE said that apart from promoting installation of contactless payment devices in market stalls, FEHD should also encourage market patrons to make payment by contactless payment means. They enquired about the publicity efforts made/to be made in this regard.

44. DD(EH)/FEHD responded that FEHD would carry out publicity to promote the use of contactless payment among patrons (e.g. setting up promotional booths in FEHD's markets). From January to February 2021, gift redemption schemes would also be launched at individual markets in different districts to encourage patrons to make payment by contactless payment means. Hopefully, this could help promote the use of contactless payment means by market stall tenants through market force.

45. USFH added that FEHD would assess whether conducting a survey could help gauge market patrons' views and experience of making payments by contactless means, with a view to mapping out new directions and strategies for promoting contactless payment services in public markets.

46. Mr Tommy CHEUNG suggested that the Government should, as an initiative under the 2021-2022 Budget, consider issuing electronic consumption vouchers in instalments to the public to stimulate local consumption and facilitate development of electronic payment in Hong Kong. USFH responded that he would convey Mr CHEUNG's suggestion to the Financial Secretary for consideration.

V. Any other business

47. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:12 pm.