

LETTERHEAD OF PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & LANDS BUREAU

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21 September 1998

Clerk to Legislative Council
Panel on Environmental Affairs
3/F., Citibank Tower
Garden Road
Hong Kong
(Attn.:Mrs. Mary Tang)

Dear Mrs. Tang,

LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs

TES Scheme

At the meeting on 30 July 1998, we briefed Members on the implementation of the various proposed changes to the Trade Effluent Surcharge (TES) Scheme. Summing up the discussion, the Panel Chairman requested us to consider the following :

- (a) provide more proactive measures to assist the restaurant trade in lowering their effluent strength (para. 19 of the draft minutes of meeting, same below) and report on the types of assistance so far conducted and to be conducted by the Administration (para. 20);
- (b) set up a demonstration centre to display different grease traps available for reducing the different pollution loads of effluent and to provide guidance on cleaner working practices to restaurant operators (para. 11); and

- (c) set up a loan scheme to facilitate small restaurants in their appeals (para. 19).

Here below are our responses.

Assistance to restaurant trade

We have been providing various assistance to the restaurant trade in lowering their effluent strength through various means, such as seminars or booklets organised/published by EPD, through collaboration with industry support organizations and through the provision of funding support under government's various funding schemes. They include :

- (i) the publication of the booklet entitled "Grease Traps for Restaurants and Food Processors" which contains detailed information on grease trap maintenance, good kitchen management practices for minimising oil and grease and the proper handling of grease trap waste. Since its first publication in 1993, the booklet has been widely distributed at seminars and to restaurants when they applied to USD/RSD for restaurant licence, and is also available at EPD's six local control offices and two Environmental Resource Centres, and the district offices of USD and RSD.
- (ii) to ensure that proper grease traps are installed by restaurants, EPD has published a professional guideline (ProPECC Practice Notes PN5/93) for Authorised Persons, architects and engineers on the design of proper grease traps.
- (iii) as the effectiveness of the grease traps would depend on regular cleaning, EPD has prepared a list of registered grease trap waste collectors for distribution to the restaurant operators at seminars and upon request.
- (iv) EPD has jointly organised two seminars with Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) on the proper control of waste water discharges, proper maintenance of grease traps, proper handling of grease trap waste and good management practices in April 1996 and July 1998 respectively. About 200 restaurant/hotel operators took part in the 1996 seminar and about 100 restaurant operators took part in the 1998 seminar.

- (v) Industry Department's Services Support Fund is currently funding a project known as "A Trade Effluent, Waste Minimization and Hygiene Support Programme" which is being implemented by the Centre of Environmental Technology (CET). Under the project, CET has carried out a study on selected restaurants to investigate into the state of waste water and grease traps of local restaurants, and will publish a guidebook on food industry's waste effluent management and good kitchen practices. Seminars and environmental audits have also been organised for restaurants. About 150 restaurant operators had participated in CET's seminars.

- (vi) The Environmental Conservation Fund is currently funding a Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) project for developing a new technology based on electro-coagulation for reducing the oil and grease content of the effluent from restaurants. The project is scheduled for completion in late 1998. HKUST intends to organize a workshop to disseminate the new technology to the restaurant trade upon completion of the project.

We would like to emphasize that the removal of the oil and grease content from effluent and the overall reduction in the effluent strength depends, to a large extent, on good housekeeping practice. We have therefore placed great emphasis on educating the restaurant trade of the importance of good housekeeping practices and will continue to do so through collaboration with industry support organisations like HKPC and CET etc. That said, we would also, through government's various funding schemes, continue to actively support initiatives for developing new technologies to help the restaurant trade to resolve their problems.

Demonstration centre

The display of different grease traps alone will not serve much practical use and the demonstration centre, if established, will have to be a simulated kitchen with sewage being discharged into the grease traps in order to demonstrate their effectiveness. Given the space requirement, it will not be possible for EPD to set up a simulated kitchen. Also, it is doubtful that any restaurants will be willing to use their own kitchen as a demonstration workshop as it would severely disrupt their daily business. As an alternative, we would consider producing a video tape in collaboration with the restaurant trade and the industry support organizations to demonstrate how good housekeeping practice will, together with the proper use of grease trap, help reduce the effluent strength. We will start discussion with the restaurant trade and the industry support organizations on this shortly.

Loan scheme

Finance Bureau is still considering the viability and the effectiveness of the proposal. We will let the Panel know our views as soon as possible.

Members may wish to note that we met the representatives of the restaurant trade on 4 September 1998. During the meeting, we have a very useful exchange of views on various issues including the use of generic COD values, the amendments to the legislation and the related Technical Memorandum to simplify the appeal procedures and the review of the oil and grease standards etc. We will maintain our dialogue with the trade on issues of their concern.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

(Danny Tsui)
for Secretary for Planning,
Environment and Lands