

For discussion  
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**LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs**  
**Subcommittee on matters relating to environmental hygiene**  
**“Open Categorization Scheme” for Food Premises**

**INTRODUCTION**

This paper briefs members on the Open Categorization Scheme (the Scheme), which is commonly known as the “5-star” grading scheme, and invites members’ views on the Scheme.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The Scheme was launched by the two former Provisional Municipal Councils as a pilot scheme for restaurants and food factories supplying lunch boxes to schools in late 1999. The objectives of the Scheme were to provide public with information on the assessed hygiene standards of these food premises and to provide the licensees with an incentive to upgrade the hygiene conditions of their premises.

**THE SCHEME**

3. The grading of the food premises was based on the results of a series of surprise inspections conducted by the two former municipal services departments from June to September 1999. During the period, health inspectors of the two departments paid no less than five surprise visits to all food premises to assess the hygiene standards. They recorded irregularities detected that were related to food and environmental hygiene. The list of items inspected is set out at Annex A.

4. Under the Scheme, food premises with an average of not more than two irregularities detected were awarded “Excellence in Hygiene” certificates. The grading is valid for one year, i.e. from 1 November 1999 till 31 October 2000 and will be reviewed annually. Food premises not graded as “Excellence in Hygiene” will also have their grading reviewed annually. At present, there are a total of 4530 (53%) restaurants and 20 (63%) food factories supplying lunch boxes to schools graded as

“Excellence in Hygiene”. A breakdown of such food premises by district is at Annex B.

5. As stated above, the grading would normally be valid for one year. However, when there is a drastic change in the hygiene conditions of a food premise (e.g. occurrence of food poisoning) or when its licence is suspended on account of breaches of the relevant legislation and licensing requirements/conditions, the “Excellence in Hygiene” grading would be cancelled immediately. A list of common types of breaches of the relevant legislation and licensing requirements/conditions is at Annex C.

6. Since the implementation of the Scheme in November 1999, six food premises have had their “Excellence in Hygiene” grading cancelled, mostly due to recent convictions by the court. In view of the large number of prosecution cases now awaiting court hearing, it is expected that more food premises will have their “Excellence in Hygiene” grading cancelled in the next few months. Up to 29 February 2000, 142 prosecutions against food business with “Excellence in Hygiene” grading have been issued. As it normally takes a few months for scheduling the court hearing, food premises being prosecuted could legitimately continue to carry on business with the “5 star” grading. Nevertheless, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is considering measures to strengthen the monitoring of food premises being graded as “Excellence in Hygiene” so as to ensure the hygiene standards of such food premises can truly reflect the grading.

7. The two former Provisional Municipal Councils also decided that food premises not awarded “Excellence in Hygiene” might apply for re-grading. So far, a total of 58 applications for re-grading have been received. The FEHD has just completed a series of surprise inspections on these food premises and is assessing the inspection results. As regards newly opened food premises, upon granting a full licence, the department will assess whether the food premise concerned is eligible to be awarded with “Excellence in Hygiene” certificate. Food premises holding only a provisional licence will not be graded.

**REVIEW OF THE SCHEME**

8. Since the introduction of the pilot scheme in November 1999, we have received many feedbacks from different sectors in the community, including media commentaries and LegCo Members. The department will conduct a review of the Scheme shortly. In particular, the department will assess the effectiveness of the Scheme in raising the hygiene standards of restaurants and in providing useful information to consumers. We hope to be able to complete the review and consult the trade and the LegCo Subcommittee before the end of the year.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department  
March 2000

**“Open Categorization Scheme” for Food Premises  
Items inspected**

1. Hygiene conditions of food room/premises
2. Sanitation of toilets
3. Food storage and temperature control
4. Food handling and protection
5. Cleanliness of equipment/utensils
6. Sterilization and storage of eating utensils
7. Cleanliness of towels/napkins/table cloth
8. Storage of refuse and waste
9. Vermin/rodent/pest control
10. Restriction of food handling, equipment cleansing and scullery activities to food rooms
11. Alternation of premises and approved layout affecting food or environmental hygiene
12. Observance of licensing requirements/conditions relating to food and environmental hygiene

Annex B

Number of Restaurants graded as “Excellence in Hygiene”  
(as at 1 Mar 2000)

| District        | Total No. of restaurants | no. of restaurants graded as “Excellence in Hygiene” |            |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--|------------|
|                 |                          | No.  | percentage |
| Urban districts | 5703                     | 3530   | 62%        |
| New Territoies  | 2799                     | 1000   | 36%        |
| Total           | 8502                     | 4530   | 53%        |

A breakdown of Food Factories (supplying lunch boxes to schools) graded as “Excellence in Hygiene” (as at 1 March 2000)

| District        | Total no. of food factories | no. of food factories graded as “Excellence in Hygiene” |            |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---|------------|
|                 |                             | No.   | percentage |
| Urban districts | 17                          | 9   | 53%        |
| New Territoies  | 15                          | 11  | 73%        |
| Total           | 32                          | 20  | 63%        |

**Common types of breaches  
of legislation and licensing requirements/conditions**

*Contravention of Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance*

- Dirty food room or food premises
- Exposure of food to risk of contamination
- Food preparation, scullery activities or storage of food utensils in open space or rear lanes
- Food business operated at place(s) other than delineated in the endorsed plan

*Breaches of licensing requirements or conditions*

- unauthorized alterations of premises resulting in material deviation from approved plan
- conducting other class or type of food business