

**For information
on 11 January 2005**

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Establishment of Chicken Hatcheries in Hong Kong

Purpose

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene held on 10 March 2004, Members requested for a brief on the development of local hatchery operation. This paper provides a progress report on the development of chicken hatcheries in Hong Kong.

Background

2. In view of the H5N1 avian influenza outbreak in the Mainland, the importation of live birds (including live poultry) and poultry meat from the Mainland was suspended on 30 January 2004. Before the import suspension, the supply of imported live chickens from the Mainland accounted for over 70% of the total live chicken consumption in Hong Kong and practically all of the day-old chicks. On 25 February 2004, the Administration briefed Members on the interim measures taken during the period when the importation of live poultry from the Mainland was suspended. One of the interim measures was to encourage local farmers to produce day-old chicks locally by importing fertile eggs for hatching so that local chicken farmers could replenish their stock during the import suspension. Against this background, Members requested the Administration to provide a progress report on the development of local hatchery production.

Actions Taken

3. A loan package under the J. E. Joseph Trust Fund was approved by the trustee on 17 March 2004 to provide financial assistance to farmers for establishing local hatcheries. Although the supply of day-old chicks

from the Mainland was resumed on 25 June 2004, the development of local hatchery production will provide a continuous supply of day-old chicks to local farms. The Administration therefore considers it desirable to continue with the scheme to provide financial assistance to farmers.

4. As at 24 December 2004, 18 farmers have installed their hatcheries, five of them have applied and already received the hatchery loans. The total amount involved in these five loan applications is around \$0.96 million.

5. As at 24 December 2004, we have recognized six off-farm hatcheries with a total incubator capacity of 774,720 eggs and licensed 12 on-farm hatchery structures with a total incubator capacity of 400,160 eggs. This adds up to a total incubator capacity of nearly 1.2 million eggs, or an estimated daily production of around 27,000 marketable chickens per day. In addition, two on-farm hatcheries with a total incubator capacity of 88,000 eggs are still pending for installation. If these hatcheries are installed, the estimated daily production of marketable chickens would be up to 29,000 per day.

6. For technical support, each 90,000 egg capacity machine needs approximately 1.5 technicians for sexing of chicks, one technician for vaccination, 1.5 technicians for checking of dead eggs and monitoring of the hatching process, and one manager for planning, monitoring of work flow and machine maintenance. The total manpower needed for the running of one set of hatching machines with a 90,000 egg capacity would be at least five persons.

7. As at 24 December 2004, seven farmers have applied for the importation of skilled hatchery workers and approval-in-principle was granted to these seven hatcheries for the importation of hatchery workers to fill 22 vacancies.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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