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3 August 2006

Clerk to Panel on Food Safety and
Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council Secretariat
(Attn: Miss Betty Ma)
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong
(Fax: 2509 0775)

Dear Miss Ma

**LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
List of outstanding items and list of follow-up actions**

At the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene meeting on 8 March 2005 and the special meeting on 26 April 2005, members requested the Administration to:

- (i) seek clarification from the Mainland whether the Mainland had intention to abolish the “closed season” policy;
- (ii) provide information on the review findings of the effectiveness of implementing “closed season” policy in the Mainland; and
- (iii) provide information on the overseas countries which had prohibited demersal trawling activities.

AFCD has clarified with the Mainland fisheries authorities about the policy and arrangement of the South China Sea "closed season". They replied that they would conduct periodic review of the "closed season" policy. The South China Sea "closed season" was implemented this year.

The responses to items (ii) and (iii) are set out in Enclosures 1 and 2 respectively.

Yours sincerely,

signed

(Wendy Au)
for Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

Encl.

c.c.
DAFC (Attn.: Dr. SF Leung) Fax : 2311 3731

The Effectiveness of “Closed Season” in the South China Sea

According to the information from Bureau of Fisheries Management and Fishing Port Superintendence of South China Sea, Ministry of Agriculture, the implementation of “closed season” has proved to be effective. Details are set out below:-

(I) Recovery of Fisheries Resources in the South China Sea

(1) Effective conservation of spawning and juvenile fish

The northern South China Sea lies in sub-tropics where sea temperature is generally higher all year round, which makes it favourable for fish spawning and gives rise to scattered spawning grounds and extended spawning season. Surveys on fish eggs conducted at different periods in the northern South China Sea indicated that the spawning season continued all year round but for a majority of species the peak period is around April to June. The population structure of major fish stock of economic value surveyed during the “closed season” (June to July) showed that the measure was effective in protecting juvenile fish population and spawning population of certain species.

(2) Increase in the density of fishing resources

The findings of two professional surveys indicated that the density of fisheries resources increased to varying extent in all seasons in northern South China Sea and Beibu Wan after the implementation of “closed season”, particularly in summer (i.e. a fortnight before and after the fishing operations resumed), during which fisheries resources in the northern South China Sea nearly doubled and that of Beibu Wan nearly tripled, as compared with the same period in 1998 before the introduction of “closed season”.

(3) Significant increase in catch

Before the implementation of “summer closed season”, fisheries resources and catches in the South China Sea had been on steady decline since 1980s. The catch rate only began to rise and returned

to the level of early 1990s after the introduction of “closed season” in 1999. An analysis of a wealth of resource survey data showed that catch rates in all fishing grounds have increased at varying extent.

(4) Changes in catch composition

After the implementation of “closed season”, biodiversity in various fishing grounds has improved which demonstrated the positive protective impact of “closed season” on fisheries resources.

(5) Phenomenon of abundant aggregation of fish stocks after annual “closed season”

Since 1999, the phenomenon of abundant aggregation of fish stock appears in different fishing grounds, which resulted in a significant increase in production. Some species that had disappeared from the South China Sea for years have reappeared.

(II) Improved cost-effectiveness in fishing industry

Implementing “closed season” could reduce the intensity of fishing and production cost. With the introduction of “closed season”, fisheries resources increase in both quantity and quality. For instance, the catch value of Guangxi region totaled \$1.03 billion in 1999, 53.4% higher than 1998, whilst the total catch value for 2000 amounted to \$1.32 billion, 28.5% higher than 1999.

(III) Structural adjustments in fishing operations

Given the differences in fisheries resources in different locations, “closed season” has varying effects on resource conservation and recovery. Thus, different regions have adjusted their operations to accommodate the “closed season” and maximize the benefit it entails. In some areas, the number of trawler and purse seining, target vessels banned under the measure, declined. Gill netting, which is not subject to any restriction during the “closed season”, in certain areas has become more popular as fresh catch commands higher price.

Countries and regions which have implemented “closed season”

Countries/regions	Control Measures
Australia	Seasonal closure is implemented in various states to promote sustainability of fisheries resources
Bahamas	Closed season is applied to manage lobster and crab fisheries
Brazil	Seasonal closure is implemented to protect pink shrimp
China	3 months moratorium from 15 June to 15 September in the Yellow Sea and the East China Sea, 2 months moratorium from 1 June to 1 August in the South China Sea; more than 100 000 vessels and 1 million fishermen are affected by the moratoriums
Dominican Republic	Closed season is implemented between 1 July and 31 October
Ecuador	Sea cucumber fishery is closed for 10 months each year to help ensure the sustainability of the resources
Certain European Union Member States	Closed season is one of the major fisheries management measures to promote sustainable fisheries development
India	Conservation measures have been adopted in both the east and west coasts by enforcing closed season during the breeding season of important species
Ireland	Closed season is implemented to protect shrimp resources
Japan	Closed season is implemented in the waters off Kyoto Prefecture
Korea	Closed season is one of the major fisheries management measures to protect marine resources
Mauritius	Closed season for net fishing is implemented to protect marine ecosystem
Mexico	Central Gulf of California is closed to shrimp fishery between May and September
Pakistan	A two-month annual closed season for shrimp fishing was introduced since 1983
Puerto Rico	Seasonal closure is implemented to protect fisheries resources
Saint Lucia	Seasonal closure is implemented to conserve lobster resources
Republic of South Africa	Closed season is applied to manage abalone and line fisheries
United States of America	Seasonal closure is implemented in various states to protect fisheries resources

