

Index Page

Replies to supplementary questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2014-15

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Food and Health

Session No. : 18

File Name : FHB(FE)-2S-e1.doc

Reply Serial No.	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
S-FHB(FE)01	S0094	LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla	139	(3) Environmental Hygiene
S-FHB(FE)02	SV015	CHAN Ka-lok, Kenneth	49	(2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services
S-FHB(FE)03	SV016	LAU Wai-hing, Emily	49	(1) Food Safety and Public Health
S-FHB(FE)04	S0184	WONG Kwok-hing	49	(2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services
S-FHB(FE)05	S0183	WONG Kwok-hing	49	(2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services
S-FHB(FE)06	S0182	WONG Kwok-hing	49	(1) Food Safety and Public Health

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)01

(Question Serial No. S0094)

Head: (139) Government Secretariat: Food and Health Bureau (Food Branch)

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Safety

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food) (Mrs. Marion LAI)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from:

Question:

Is there any specific plan to relocate the Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market? As the relevant district is densely inhabited, with a population of 400 000, the Poultry Market has caused serious hygiene problems.

Asked by: Hon. LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla

Reply:

The Administration is exploring the feasibility of relocating the Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market. In identifying a suitable replacement site for live poultry wholesale activities, we have to take into account a number of factors. If and when a potential replacement site has been identified, the relevant departments will also need to conduct detailed technical assessments. In designing and planning the new wholesale poultry market, consultation with relevant stakeholders will have to be conducted at different stages.

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been maintaining a clean and hygienic environment in the Cheung Sha Wan Temporary Wholesale Poultry Market. The stocking area is cleaned every hour and the market floor is disinfected twice every week. Regular and surprise checks are conducted on wholesalers and their workers to ensure compliance with the bio-security requirements, including cleansing and disinfection of poultry holding cages. Additional inspection or cleansing would be conducted where necessary. Faecal and environmental swabs are also collected from the wholesale market on a regular basis for AI testing to ensure that the venue remains free of AI virus. In 2013, new facilities were set up for the separate holding of leftover local chickens, imported chickens and minor poultry with a view to minimising cross-infection. AFCD will continue with these efforts in the coming year.

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
ORAL QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)02

(Question Serial No. SV015)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 250 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No.):

Pursuant to the reply FHB(FE)158, the Administration is requested to provide information on how the current level of fee of \$140 for placing each additional urn in an allocated niche is determined, and how much of the cost is being recovered at this level of fee.

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Ka-lok, Kenneth

Reply:

The current level of the fee in question (namely \$140 for placing an additional urn in an allocated niche) was determined by the former Urban Council / Regional Council having regard to the costs incurred at their time in providing the relevant service and their fee charging policies. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department inherited the fee level in 2000. It has remained unchanged since then. At this level of fee, about 45% of the cost is recovered in 2013-14.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**S-FHB(FE)03****(Question Serial No. SV016)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 248 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No.):

Pursuant to the discussion on food surveillance, the Administration is requested to provide information on the number and details of test cases identified by the Centre for Food Safety to be unsatisfactory as compared with those identified and reported by the Consumer Council.

Asked by: Hon. LAU Wai-hing, Emily

Reply:

A detailed breakdown of unsatisfactory food samples by number, food group and major problems involved identified by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) under its Food Surveillance Programme from 2011 to 2013 is provided as follows -

Food Group	2011		2012		2013	
	No. of unsatisfactory samples	Major problems (No. of samples)	No. of unsatisfactory samples	Major problems (No. of samples)	No. of unsatisfactory samples	Major problems (No. of samples)
Vegetables, fruits & related products	20	metallic contamination(11)	19	metallic contamination(11)	8	metallic contamination(3)
		preservatives(4)		preservatives(3)		preservatives(3)
		pathogens(3)		pathogens(3)		pesticide residues(2)
		pesticide residues(2)		pesticide residues(2)		
Meat, poultry & related products	25	sulphur dioxide in fresh meat(14)	28	sulphur dioxide in fresh meat(23)	4	veterinary drug residues(1)
		veterinary drug residues(7)		preservatives(1)		preservatives(3)
		preservatives(3)		pathogens(4)		
		pathogens(1)				

Aquatic products and related products	19	metallic contamination(6) ----- veterinary drug residues(6) ----- preservatives(4) ----- toxins(2) ----- colouring matters(1)	20	metallic contamination(9) ----- veterinary drug residues(5) ----- toxins(5) ----- pathogens(1)	7	metallic contamination(3) ----- veterinary drug residue(1) ----- preservatives(1) ----- pathogens(2)
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	39	hygienic indicators(37) ----- pathogens(1) ----- preservatives(1)	42	hygienic indicators(24) ----- nutrients(17) ----- preservatives(1)	24	hygienic indicators(24)
Cereal, grains and related products	3	metallic contamination(3)	0		1	metallic contamination(1)
Others	68	pathogens(9) ----- plasticisers(49) ----- preservatives(7) ----- toxins(2) ----- colouring matters(1)	23	hygienic indicators(1) ----- pathogens(7) ----- plasticisers(3) ----- preservatives(7) ----- colouring matters(1) ----- polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons(3) ----- antioxidant(1)	13	pathogens(5) ----- preservatives(3) ----- colouring matters(5)
Total	174		132		57	

Enforcement actions were taken promptly upon detection of non-compliance cases. The food surveillance results were announced by press releases, as well as uploaded onto CFS' website and Facebook Page (Note 1) in a timely manner.

A detailed breakdown of suspected unsatisfactory food samples concerning food safety by number, food group and major problems involved, identified by the Consumer Council from 2011 to 2013 and known to CFS, is provided as follows -

Food Group	2011		2012		2013	
	No. of suspected unsatisfactory samples	Major problems (No. of samples)	No. of suspected unsatisfactory samples	Major problems (No. of samples)	No. of suspected unsatisfactory samples	Major problems (No. of samples)
Vegetables, fruits & related products	0		0		0	
Meat, poultry & related products	0		0		0	
Aquatic products and related products	0		0		0	
Milk, milk products & frozen confections	0		0		0	
Cereal, grains and related products	0		0		3 (Note 3)	metallic contamination (3)
Others	12 (Note 2)	hygienic indicators(11) ----- pathogen(1)	0		12 (Note 4)	antibiotics residues(6) ----- pesticide residues(6)
Total	12		0		15	

CFS followed up on the above cases according to established procedures.

Note 1: CFS launched its Facebook page in October 2013.

Note 2: All 12 cases were identified during joint studies by the Consumer Council and CFS.

Note 3: All three cases (all concerning rice) were detected with cadmium levels exceeding the legal limit. Based on the information provided by the Consumer Council, CFS conducted risk assessment on the samples concerned, and concluded that normal consumption of the samples at the reported levels of cadmium is unlikely to pose any adverse health effects for average consumers. Subsequent surveillance revealed that one of the products concerned was found to be on sale. The sample taken was tested with a cadmium level exceeding the legal limit. CFS promptly issued a press release and sent warning letters to the retailer and the distributor concerned, ordering them to suspend sale of the affected batch of the product to ensure food safety and safeguard public health.

Note 4: All 12 cases (all concerning honey) were detected with low / trace levels of antibiotics or pesticide residues. Based on the information provided by the Consumer Council, CFS conducted risk assessment on the samples concerned, and concluded that adverse health effects due to normal consumption of the samples at the reported levels of antibiotics and pesticide residues were unlikely.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)04

(Question Serial No. S0184)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 250 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No.):

Over the past three consecutive years, the number of water seepage cases that could not be resolved (i.e. 2 089, 1 963 and 2 336 cases in 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively) accounted for one fifth of the total number of cases handled by the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (the Joint Office). In this connection, please advise whether the Joint Office has studied the use of new technology in water seepage tests. If yes, please advise on the new technology used; if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

With the assistance of the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute, the Joint Office is exploring the feasibility of tracing the source of water seepage through real-time monitoring of water consumption in the suspected premises and variation in the moisture content of the seepage spot. In addition, the Joint Office will commission in 2014 a consultancy study on the application of latest technology in identifying sources of water seepage in buildings.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)05

(Question Serial No. S0183)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 250 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No.):

Over the past three consecutive years, the number of complaints about feeding of wild birds causing adverse public health effects has increased by more than double (i.e. from 202 cases in 2011 to 280 cases in 2012 and then to 493 cases in 2013). In this connection, please advise whether the Department has stepped up its efforts against the problem and strengthened prosecution action. If yes, please give the details; if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

Feeding of wild birds causing dirtiness to public places is an offence under section 4(1) of the Public Cleansing and Prevention of Nuisances Regulation, Cap. 132BK, and \$1,500 Fixed Penalty Notices (Notices) may be issued to the offenders under the Fixed Penalty (Public Cleanliness Offences) Ordinance, Cap. 570.

With the increase in the number of complaints in 2013, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) has stepped up its enforcement actions against feeding of wild birds causing dirtiness to public places. In 2013, the Department issued 91 Notices and took out 4 prosecutions against persons who caused dirtiness to public places in feeding wild birds. The number of Notices issued in 2013 has increased by about 60%, compared with that in 2012. The Department will continue to implement enhanced measures to prevent environmental hygiene nuisances caused by the conglomeration of wild birds. These include stepping up inspection, cleaning and disinfection with diluted bleach at public places where wild birds gather; reminding the public not to feed wild birds through distribution of leaflet and erection of warning signs at specific locations; and taking stringent enforcement actions against feeding of wild birds causing dirtiness to public places.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-FHB(FE)06

(Question Serial No. S0182)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Food Safety and Public Health

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

This question originates from: Estimates on Expenditure Volume I Page 249-250 (if applicable)

Question (Member Question No.):

The continuous rise in the rodent infestation rate, which nearly doubled in the past three years, reflected the ineffectiveness of the rodent control work. In this connection, please advise on the measures to address this situation and whether there are any innovative methods to tackle the rodent problem.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Kwok-hing

Reply:

The Rodent Infestation Rate (RIR) in 2011, 2012 and 2013 was 1.7%, 2.4% and 3.1% respectively. Whilst the RIR in 2013 went up slightly from the low levels in the previous two years, it remained at a low single digit, suggesting that the rodent problem in public areas remains generally under control. Effective rodent prevention and control hinges on continued co-operation between the community and the Government. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) will continue to enhance rodent control work and launch district-specific publicity and educational programmes to promote greater community involvement in rodent control and prevention in districts with higher infestation rates, in addition to its regular pest control work and annual territory-wide publicity campaigns.

The overall RIR is the average infestation rate of the districts during the period. When the RIR of a district is higher than ten per cent, the Department will strengthen rodent disinfection operations there. For a district with an RIR reaching 20 per cent or higher, the relevant government departments will form a joint task force and launch special rodent control operations to strengthen rodent disinfection, environmental improvement and cleansing services comprehensively, and to promote rodent control in the community.