

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)619/13-14
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/FE

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 12 November 2013, at 2:30 pm
in Conference Room 3 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** : Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan (Chairman)
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Claudia MO
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Member attending** : Hon James TO Kun-sun
- Members absent** : Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
Hon CHAN Han-pan

**Public Officers : Item IV
attending**

Dr KO Wing-man, BBS, JP
Secretary for Food and Health

Mrs Marion LAI CHAN Chi-kuen, JP
Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)

Dr LEUNG Siu-fai, JP
Deputy Director
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Dr SO Ping-man
Assistant Director (Fisheries)
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department

Item V

Dr KO Wing-man, BBS, JP
Secretary for Food and Health

Mrs Marion LAI CHAN Chi-kuen, JP
Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)

Mr Philip CHAN Kwan-ye, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) Special
Duties

Item VI

Mr Christopher WONG Kwok-bun, JP
Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 1

Mr SIN Kwok-hau, JP
Assistant Director (Operations) 3
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr YUEN Ming-chi
Pest Control Officer in-charge
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Dr Ellen CHAN Ying-lung, JP
Assistant Director (Environmental Infrastructure)
Environmental Protection Department

Clerk in attendance : Ms Alice LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (2) 2

Staff in attendance : Mr Jove CHAN
Senior Council Secretary (2) 2

Miss Emma CHEUNG
Legislative Assistant (2) 2

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I. Confirmation of minutes

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)211/13-14)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2013 were confirmed.

II. Information papers issued since the last meeting

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)55/13-14(01), CB(2)63/13-14(01), CB(2)87/13-14(01), CB(2)90/13-14(01), CB(2)94/13-14(01) & (02), CB(2)179/13-14(01) & (02), CB(2)235/13-14(01) to (03), CB(2)255/13-14(01), and CB(2)259/13-14(01))

2. Members noted that the following papers had been issued since the last meeting -

- (a) Letter dated 10 October 2013 from Hon Tommy CHEUNG to the Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH") on the proposed Guidelines on Assessing Liquor Licence Applications;
- (b) Joint letter dated 11 October 2013 from Hon Steven HO and Hon CHAN Han-pan on the problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district;
- (c) Submission dated 9 October 2013 from the Alliance for Hong Kong Animal Police;
- (d) Administration's information note on further extension of public market stalls rental freeze;
- (e) Letter dated 11 October 2013 from Dr Hon Helena WONG to SFH on the problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai;

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- (f) Letter dated 15 October 2013 from Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki on the problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai;
- (g) Letter dated 24 October 2013 from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN on regulation of sale of chilled meat;
- (h) Letter dated 26 October 2013 from Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki on regulation of sale of chilled meat;
- (i) Joint letter dated 15 October 2013 from Hon Steven HO and Hon CHAN Han-pan on safety of aquatic products imported from Japan;
- (j) Letter dated 9 September 2013 from Dr Hon Helena WONG to SFH on safety of aquatic products imported from Japan; and
- (k) Administration's response to Dr Hon Helena WONG's letter dated 9 September 2013 on safety of aquatic products imported from Japan;
- (l) Administration's response to the two letters dated 24 and 26 October 2013 respectively from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN and Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki regarding the Ombudsman's direct investigation report on the regulation of shops selling chilled meat by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD"); and
- (m) Letter dated 8 November 2013 from Prof Hon Joseph LEE on the presence of copper chlorophyll in food products produced by a food manufacturer in Taiwan.

3. The Chairman informed members that the papers as referred to in paragraph 2(l) and 2(m) above had been issued to members on the day before the meeting.

III. Date of next meeting and items for discussion
(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)218/13-14(01) and (02))

List of outstanding items for discussion

4. Members noted that the list of outstanding items for discussion (LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(01)) had been updated pursuant to the

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discussion at the informal meeting on 17 October 2013 between the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Panel and SFH to discuss the Panel's work plan for the 2013-2014 session.

5. Noting that the proposed timing for discussion of the item of "Supply of live cattle" was in the second quarter of 2014, Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed his hope that the discussion of this item could be advanced to early 2014.

Regular meeting in December 2013

6. Members agreed to discuss the following items at the next regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, 10 December 2013 at 2:30 pm -

- (a) Proposed measures for compliance with fire safety requirements by food premises;
- (b) Review of supply chain of powdered formula; and
- (c) Review of small volume exemption fees - Proposed amendments to Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap. 132W).

7. Members agreed that deputations would be invited to give views on item (a) of paragraph 6 above at the next regular meeting and to allow sufficient time for discussion, the meeting would be extended for 30 minutes to end at 5:00 pm.

Special meeting on 19 November 2013

8. The Chairman reminded members that a special meeting would be held on 19 November 2013 to receive views from deputations on "Issues relating to regulation of private columbaria and supply of public niches". The Chairman further said that, in the light of the recent human infection cases of avian influenza ("AI") reported in Zhejiang and Guangdong, an additional discussion item on "Prevention and control of avian influenza" had been added to the agenda for the special meeting. The Administration was requested to brief the Panel on its measures and initiatives on the prevention and control of AI. To allow sufficient time for discussion, the special meeting would be held from 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm. Members raised no objection to the above arrangement.

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Local duty visits

9. At the suggestion of the Chairman, members agreed to conduct visits to the New Territories North Animal Management Centre ("NTNAMC") and the Man Kam To Food Control Office ("MKTFCO"), so as to better understand the operation of stray animals management and the inspection work of fresh produce imported from the Mainland at MKTFCO. The date of the visit to the NTNAMC should dovetail, as far as possible, with the proposed timing for discussion on "Trap-Neuter-Return trial scheme for stray dogs and handling of animal cases".

IV. Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)218/13-14(03) and (04))

10. At the invitation of the Chairman, SFH briefed members on the Administration's proposal to set up a Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund ("the Development Fund"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(03)).

11. Members also noted the background brief entitled "Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund" (LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(04)) prepared by the Legislative Council ("LegCo") Secretariat.

Submissions tabled at the meeting

12. Members noted the following submissions tabled at the meeting -

- (a) Submission from Hong Kong Fishermen Consortium (Chinese version only);
- (b) Submission from Hong Kong Fishermen's Association (Chinese version only); and
- (c) Submission from Hong Kong and Kowloon Fishermen Association Limited (Chinese version only).

(Post-meeting note: The submissions tabled at the meeting were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)270/13-14 on 12 November 2013.)

The Development Fund

13. In response to the Deputy Chairman's remarks that the Development

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Fund was a form of compensation for the trawler owners affected by the trawl ban in Hong Kong waters, SFH stressed that it was a long-term funding scheme recommended by the Committee on Sustainable Fisheries ("CSF"). The Development Fund was aimed to foster sustainable development and enhance the overall competitiveness of the local fisheries industry, and was not meant to be a compensation for the affected trawler owners. The Government had introduced a one-off assistance scheme for those affected by the trawl ban ("the Scheme"), including making ex-gratia payments to the affected trawler vessel owners for permanent loss of fishing grounds arising from the ban.

14. Mr WONG Kwok-hing cited an example and pointed out that the concerted efforts of other related bureaux/departments were required for making the policy of promoting the modernization and development of sustainable fisheries a success. He urged SFH to co-ordinate the work of other bureaux and departments to ensure policies across bureaux were compatible with the Government's fisheries policy.

15. SFH responded that the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB") would take the leading role in co-ordinating efforts across bureaux and departments to provide support for the sustainable fisheries development. Referring to the example cited by Mr WONG Kwok-hing, he said that when the Development Fund came into operation, the fishermen concerned could apply for and make use of the fund to modify and refit their fishing vessels so as to meet the relevant legal requirements on vessels for carrying passengers.

16. Dr KWOK Ka-ki said that he was in support of the setting up of the Development Fund. Pointing out that the Government had put forward various land development policies including the development of North East New Territories and New West New Territories, as well as reclamation projects, he was concerned that these policies might be in conflict with the policy of sustainable fisheries development. He asked about the measures taken by the Administration to encourage fishermen to pursue sustainable practices for fishing operations.

17. SFH responded that given limited resources, the Government had to strike a proper balance among various policies that were formulated to satisfy different needs in society. As regards the measures to promote sustainable fisheries, Deputy Director of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("DD/AFCD") advised that CSF had formulated the policy blueprint in 2010 and the Administration had been rolling out the recommended fisheries management measures including the trawl ban and registration of local fishing vessels to control fishing effort. In addition, the Administration had also reviewed the Fisheries Development Loan Fund

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("the Loan Fund") to lower its threshold in order to facilitate fishermen to apply for the Loan Fund. Having reviewed the changes in circumstances since the imposition of a moratorium on issuing new fish culture licences in 1990, the Government had decided to issue new licences in three fish culture zones with surplus carrying capacity. DD/AFCD further advised that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") had collaborated with tertiary education institutions to conduct studies on the technological development of fish feed and fish fry production. With the setting up of the Development Fund, these institutions could make use of the Fund to carry out further studies on the modernization of fisheries industry.

18. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that while he would not raise objection to the Administration's proposal to establish the Development Fund, he was concerned that the projects that might benefit from the Fund covered a wide scope of areas. The Administration should work out a detailed plan for the use of the Fund, otherwise the Fund might not achieve its intended purposes. He asked why the Administration did not consider using the revenue of the Fish Marketing Organization ("FMO") for such purposes and also sought information about the details of the Development Fund (e.g. the amount of grants to be disbursed each year).

19. SFH responded that the Development Fund scheme was formulated in accordance with the recommendations of CSF. Projects to be proposed should aim at assisting local fisheries community to adopt a sustainable and high value-added mode of operations and enhancing the overall competitiveness of the fisheries industry. As regards the details of the Fund, DD/AFCD said that it was estimated that the annual disbursement of grants was about \$50 million and the Development Fund was expected to last for 10 years. The amount of grants involved in each project would be in the range of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands and even up to millions of dollars, depending on the scale of the projects. DD/AFCD further advised that FMO had presently an accumulated reserve of around \$100 million, but the annual operational expenses of FMO were about \$50 million. It was therefore not possible for FMO to provide substantive financial support for projects that aimed to promote sustainable fisheries development.

20. Mr Tommy CHEUNG requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the estimated annual disbursement of the Development Fund by categories of the projects in its submission to the Finance Committee ("FC"). SFH explained that such projects would not be led by the Government but would be initiated by interested parties instead. As such, the Administration would not be able to provide such information at this stage.

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21. Ms Claudia MO queried whether the Development Fund could genuinely contribute to the sustainable fisheries development. She expressed worries that only those fishermen with affiliation to certain political groups could benefit from the Fund. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that in his view, the Development Fund was in fact a political reward for support rendered by the fisheries industry in the election of the Chief Executive. However, in the light of the fact that the local fisheries industry was facing a difficult business environment with surging fuel prices, reduction in fish catch and the annual fishing moratorium, he would support the proposal of setting up the Development Fund, with a view to improving the operating environment and competitiveness of the local fisheries industry.

22. In response to Mr WONG Yuk-man's concerns as to whether there was overlapping in the functions of CSF and the Advisory Committee of the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund ("the Advisory Committee") and about the objectives of the Loan Fund and the Development Fund, SFH advised that CSF was established in 2006 to study the long-term goals, the direction and feasible options for the sustainable development of the local fisheries industry. It recommended strategies on three fronts to promote the sustainable development of the local fisheries industry, namely control of fishing effort, conservation and enhancement of fisheries resources and promotion of modernized and sustainable practices, including the setting up of a long-term funding scheme. While the Loan Fund was aimed to provide loans for improving the operating environment of fishermen, the purpose of the Development Fund was to promote the development of new technologies to enhance the overall competitiveness of the fisheries industry by subsidizing research and development programmes. The Advisory Committee, which would be set up under the Development Fund, was to advise the Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation on the overall strategy for funding projects and the relative priorities of applications for funding support under the Development Fund.

23. While expressing support for the Administration's proposal, Mr WU Chi-wai asked whether the Administration had conducted any fisheries ecological baseline studies to facilitate its assessment of the applications for the Development Fund. SFH responded that CSF had studied and reviewed the local fisheries development and recommended a basket of fisheries management measures including banning trawling activities, controlling fishing effort, developing sustainable practices for fishing operations in Hong Kong waters and transforming into off-shore fishing or recreational fishing, etc. The Administration had been providing support for implementing these measures, as well as the technological development on fish feed and fish fry production.

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24. Mr Christopher CHUNG was of the view that the Development Fund should also support commercial projects as it could enhance the development of the fisheries industry. He pointed out that some projects, such as exploring new opportunities in the South China Sea, required strong financial and technical support and were unlikely to be carried out by individual fishermen in a sustainable manner. He considered that the Development Fund should be divided into different categories of projects in order to attract different types of applicants such as individual fishermen, fisheries organizations and academic institutions. He also enquired whether the Administration would provide any assistance to individual fishermen.

25. SFH said he noted Mr Christopher CHUNG's views. The Administration would consider organizing workshops on relevant subjects for the applicants to equip them with necessary knowledge and providing relevant support to assist those fishermen who wished to engage in fishing in the outer waters in the South China Sea.

Applications of the Development Fund

26. The Deputy Chairman said that the fisheries sector, while welcoming the establishment of the Development Fund, also expressed concern that most of the successful applicants would be academic institutions and environmental organizations which were more experienced than the fishermen in funding application and project bidding. The projects supported by the Fund would be biased towards conservation of marine resources instead of the development of fisheries industry.

27. Expressing concern that the application procedures were complicated for fishermen and fishermen associations, Mr WONG Kwok-hing urged the Administration to streamline the application procedures in order to attract more fishermen to apply for the Fund. Expressing similar view, Dr KWOK Ka-ki enquired about the assistance to be provided by the Administration for fishermen who were generally less educated to submit their applications.

28. In response, SFH said that the Advisory Committee would set up a vetting committee/subcommittee for vetting applications and the applications would be assessed on the basis of a set of assessment criteria. The Administration trusted that the approved applications would not bias towards certain areas of projects. DD/AFCD advised that AFCD officers would provide assistance to the applicants where necessary in preparing the information required for seeking resources from the Development Fund.

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Manpower supply of the fisheries industry

29. Dr KWOK Ka-kai and Mr WU Chi-wai expressed concern about adequacy of manpower supply to ensure the long-term sustainable development of local fisheries. Sharing similar concern, Mr Christopher CHUNG enquired about the initiatives taken by the Administration to maintain sufficient manpower to meet the needs of the local fisheries industry.

30. DD/AFCD said that AFCD had introduced pilot scheme to facilitate development of sustainable fisheries and related operations (e.g. recreational fishing) and provided on-the-job training programmes (e.g. fishing vessel operation and aquaculture techniques) to fishermen, their family members and those who wish to join the fisheries industry.

Composition of the Advisory Committee

31. The Deputy Chairman was concerned about the composition of the Advisory Committee and considered that the Advisory Committee should comprise more members from the fisheries sector. SFH said that as the Advisory Committee would comprise members including representatives of the fisheries industry, professionals, businessmen, academics and Government officials, he considered the composition of the Advisory Committee well-balanced.

Other issues discussed

32. The Deputy Chairman said that the Administration should enhance its efforts in handling appeal cases in respect of ex-gratia allowance for trawler owners and strengthen its communication with the trawler owners affected by the trawl ban. Ms Claudia MO expressed great dissatisfaction with the Administration's handling of appeal cases lodged by the affected trawler owners against the decisions of AFCD. She said that the appellants had complained to her that the criteria adopted by AFCD in assessing their applications for ex-gratia allowance was unclear and the time for processing appeal cases was unduly long. As the information provided to the Fishermen Claims Appeal Board ("FCAB") to facilitate its consideration of appeals was prepared by AFCD, it might not be fair to the appellants.

33. SFH responded that the proposal of the Scheme including the vetting mechanism and appeal arrangement was discussed by the Panel and approved by FC. The Administration had set up an inter-departmental working group ("IWG") to process applications under the Scheme. FCAB comprising non-official members was set up to process and adjudicate appeals by the applicants against the decisions of the IWG. The appellant and IWG as the

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respondent would have opportunities to make their submissions giving a clear account of the information and each side could respond to the other side's submissions. The members of FCAB were appointed by SFH and some of its members possessed legal background. Having considered the substantial number of appeal cases, more members had been appointed to FCAB to speed up the process required to handle the appeal cases.

Conclusion

34. The Chairman concluded that most of the Panel members supported the proposed creation of a new commitment of \$500 million for the Development Fund and did not raise objection to the Administration's submission of the proposal to FC for consideration and approval at its meeting in December 2013.

V. Proposed creation of one permanent post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (D3) in the Food Branch of the Food and Health Bureau

(LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(05))

35. At the invitation of the Chairman, SFH briefed members on the Administration's proposal to create one permanent post of Administrative Officer Staff Grade B (D3) in the Food Branch of FHB ("the establishment proposal"), details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(05)).

The Administration's establishment proposal

36. The Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, Miss Alice MAK and Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed support for the establishment proposal. The Deputy Chairman said that he supported the Administration's proposal because its purpose was to cope with the substantial expansion in workload related to ensuring food safety. Dr KWOK expressed similar view. The Chairman hoped that with the strengthened senior directorate support in the Food Branch, the work of FHB would be carried out in a more effective, professional and timely manner.

37. Noting that the duties of the proposed Deputy Secretary for Food and Health (Food)2 ("DSFH(F)2") were currently performed by a supernumerary post of Deputy Secretary for Food and Health(Food)(Special Duties) ("DSFH(F)(SD)") which was created on 3 August 2013, Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked who was responsible for such duties prior to the creation of the supernumerary post. He further asked whether FHB had considered the

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option of extending the supernumerary post of DSFH(F)SD for another period of time, say two to four years, rather than creating a permanent post of DSFH(F)2.

38. Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food) ("PSFH(F)") advised that before the creation of the present DSFH(F)SD post, a supernumerary deputy secretary ("DS") post was created in 2009 for a period of four years to provide senior directorate support in the Food Branch for the preparation and introduction of the Food Safety Bill. The holder of that supernumerary post had also performed duties related to amendments of a number of food safety legislation, such as those to prohibit the presence of three exogenous estrogens in dried milk, condensed milk and reconstituted milk. Given the increasing volume and complexity of duties in the Food Branch which oversaw a wide portfolio encompassing food safety and environmental hygiene, and ensuring food safety was a long-term mission entailing heavy workload, it was necessary for the Food Branch to have two permanent Deputy Secretaries to provide senior directorate support.

39. Mr Tommy CHEUNG said that he had reservation about the establishment proposal. Although the Food Branch of FHB had to oversee a wide portfolio encompassing food safety and environmental hygiene, he doubted whether there was genuine need for it to have two DS's to take charge of all the policy issues. He wondered whether this reflected the inefficiency of civil servants in FHB.

40. Pointing out that in many occasions, it was the media which first reported food incidents occurred in Hong Kong and overseas, Mr WONG Yuk-man questioned the justifications for creating a permanent DS post which would be tasked to manage and co-ordinate the response to food incidents. Expressing concern that the Food Branch of FHB had a bloated structure with too many directorate staff, he suggested the Administration to consider extending the supernumerary post of DSFH(F)SD for another six months and conducting a review on the need for a permanent post upon the expiry of the extended period. Given the wide scope of work (including policy issues related to columbaria) under the purview of the Food Branch, he commented that the title of the Branch did not reflect its work accurately.

41. SFH responded that Food Branch of FHB oversaw a wide portfolio encompassing food safety, agriculture and fisheries, and environmental hygiene. The portfolio of environmental hygiene covered a wide range of policy issues, such as columbaria, hawkers and public markets, etc. Since he had taken up the post of SFH, he found that the civil servants in FHB worked diligently and efficiently in assisting him to introduce various new policy initiatives. SFH said that although the supernumerary DS post created in

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2009 was mainly to provide support to the introduction of the Food Safety Bill, and the Bill had been enacted as the Food Safety Ordinance in 2011, there was substantial work relating to food safety that needed to be followed up. SFH stressed that it was impossible to rely solely on one DS to take charge of all the issues in Food Branch. The nature and complexity of the regulatory work on food safety had evolved to the point that there was a need to strengthen the support at the senior directorate level on a long-term basis.

42. Prof Joseph LEE was concerned about the staffing support to the new DSFH(F)2. He asked whether there were any supernumerary posts of supporting staff that would be changed to permanent posts or whether there was a need to create new posts to support the DSFH(F)2. SFH explained that the proposed creation of the DSFH(F)2 post was to maintain the existing level of senior directorate support and policy steer given to the Food Branch of FHB on a long-term basis. DSFH(F)2 post would maintain close contact with major food supplying economies to conduct working level and high level exchanges, as well as liaison on subjects relating to food safety. The Administration did not see the need to increase manpower arising from the proposed creation of the new post of DSFH(F)2 in the Food Branch.

Duties of the proposed DSFH(F)2

43. Mr WONG Kwok-hing noted from the Administration's paper that DSFH(F)2 would be responsible for the policy issues related to food safety, including updating the food safety standards in legislation so as to ensure that Hong Kong's monitoring and regulatory regime was in line with the best international practice. As the Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") of the United States was seeking the public view on the elimination of partially hydrogenated oils ("PHOs"), which was the primary dietary source of artificial trans fat in processed foods, he asked whether the work relating to the regulation of trans fat in Hong Kong was under the responsibility of DSFH(F)2.

44. SFH replied in the affirmative. DSFH(F)SD supplemented that under the existing nutrition labelling requirements in Hong Kong, the content of trans fat in prepackaged food had to be labelled to assist consumers in making informed food choices. The Administration had also encouraged the food trade to reduce the amount of trans fat in food because of concerns over health effects of trans fat. Regarding the proposal of FDA for eliminating PHOs in food, CFS would actively follow up the matter and monitor the international development to ensure that the relevant regulatory practices were in line with the international practices as appropriate.

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45. The Deputy Chairman asked whether the post holder's areas of work included the provision of support to the registered farms in the Mainland which were owned and operated by Hong Kong farmers. DSFH(F)SD advised that the Administration had worked closely with the relevant Mainland authorities, and encouraged and supported Hong Kong farmers to operate accredited farms in the Mainland with a view to maintaining stable and safe supply of food to Hong Kong.

46. The Deputy Chairman and Dr KWOK Ka-ki sought information about the scope of duties of DSFH(F)2. SFH and PSFH(F) responded with the following points -

- (a) the proposed DSFH(F)2 would be responsible for all matters pertaining to food safety and food supply. CFS, which would be overseen by DSFH(2), monitored food incidents, both local and overseas, on a daily basis to ensure timely responses could be made in case such incidents would affect the food safety or public health in Hong Kong;
- (b) DSFH(F)2 would also oversee the policy work relating to pesticide residues in food including the smooth implementation of the Pesticide Residues in Food Regulation (Cap. 132CM) ("the Regulation"). Intensive discussions had been held with the Mainland relevant authorities to ensure the smooth implementation of the Regulation which would be in operation on 1 August 2014; and
- (c) other aspects of work in the pipeline included the regulation of claims in formula products and foods intended for infants and young children, the import of poultry eggs and aquatic products, and the review of the safety standards for veterinary drug residues in food and food animals and heavy metals in food.

47. Pointing out that the work of CFS was important to ensure food safety in Hong Kong, Dr KWOK Ka-ki was concerned about the manpower situation in CFS. He enquired about the number of staff in CFS deployed for undertaking duties related to food safety. PSFH(F) said that CFS had constantly reviewed its establishment to ensure that its manpower support was adequate to meet its operational needs. She undertook to provide the requested information in writing after the meeting. PSFH(F) added that the work of CFS in ensuring the safety of local food was highly regarded internationally.

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48. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen asked whether DSFH(F)2 would oversee the safety of pet food. PSFH(F) advised that the subject would be taken care of by DSFH(F)1.

49. Miss Alice MAK considered it necessary for FHB to formulate policy to ensure the sufficient food supply in Hong Kong in order to stabilize food prices. She hoped the Administration to expedite the formulation of policies on the development of agriculture and the opening up of the market of live cattle. SFH responded that the Administration had started reviewing its agricultural policy.

Conclusion

50. Summing up, the Chairman said that the majority of Panel members supported the establishment proposal and the Panel did not raise objection to the Administration's submission of the proposal to the ESC of FC for consideration. She also requested the Administration to note Mr WONG Yuk-man's suggestion of extending the supernumerary post of DSFH(F)SD for another six months before further reviewing the need for a permanent post.

VI. Tackling the problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)218/13-14(06) and (07))

51. The Chairman extended the meeting for 15 minutes beyond its appointed time to allow more time for discussion.

52. At the invitation of the Chairman, DSFH(F)1 briefed members on the follow-up actions and investigations in respect of the recent proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(06)).

53. Members also noted the information note entitled "The problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai" (LC Paper No. CB(2)218/13-14(07)) prepared by LegCo Secretariat.

Proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai

54. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman expressed similar concern about the problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai. The Chairman said that she had visited the Tuen Mun district, Ha Pak Nai and the West New Territories ("WENT") Landfill in October 2013 and found that the areas were swamped by a significant number of flies.

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55. Mr Michael TIEN said that he was told by a worker of WENT Landfill that there were a lot of flies gathering and breeding at the WENT Landfill in September 2013. The Chairman said that she had also heard from some workers working there that there was a strike in September 2013. She was concerned whether the regular pest disinfection work had been affected by the strike, thus leading to the problem of proliferation of flies.

56. Assistant Director (Environmental Infrastructure)/Environmental Protection Department ("AD(EI)/EPD") affirmed that there were no reports of cases of significant flies breeding nor strike at WENT Landfill. AD(EI)/EPD advised that the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") officers regularly inspected the vicinity of WENT Landfill near Ha Pak Nai to monitor the problem of flies, if any. In the light of the reports on the proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district and Ha Pak Nai, the contractor at WENT Landfill had stepped up the disinfection work thereat. Assistant Director (Operations) 3/Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("AD(Ops)3/FEHD") said that FEHD would also step up the inspection and pest disinfection work in Ha Pak Nai.

57. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, AD(EI)/EPD explained that dead animal bodies in plastic bags were put in special trenches at the landfill and then covered with layers of soil with disinfectant applied on top to reduce the odour caused by the dead bodies of animals.

58. Noting the Administration's conclusion that there was no evidence suggesting that the problem of proliferation of flies in the Tuen Mun district originated from WENT Landfill, Miss Alice MAK enquired about the genuine source of flies in the district. Ms MAK and Dr KWOK Ka-ki expressed similar concern about hygienic condition of the district. They asked about how often FEHD conducted inspections to detect the problem of flies nuisance and carried out pest control exercises at markets in the Leung King Estate, Sam Shing Estate and Butterfly Estate, as well as the villages, channels, gullies, etc. in the district.

59. DSFH(F)1 and AD(Ops)3/FEHD advised that FEHD regularly carried out mosquitoes, flies and rodent prevention and control work at public areas in the district, and inspected areas with higher risk of environmental hygiene problem such as rear lanes, refuse collections points and markets. DSFH(F)1 undertook to provide written information on the inspection pattern of FEHD at markets in Leung King Estate, Sam Shing Estate and Butterfly Estate in Tuen Mun to the Panel after the meeting.

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60. The Deputy Chairman, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Miss Alice MAK were concerned about the Administration's measures to prevent proliferation of flies. DSFH(F)1 and Pest Control Office in-charge/FEHD ("PCO/FEHD") advised that at the locations where the environment was suitable for breeding of flies, FEHD would monitor the fly problem after remedial actions had been taken. FEHD would assist EPD on considering setting up flies monitoring points by using traps for flies in the WENT Landfill. In case the number of flies trapped increased at certain locations, the Administration would step up the pest control measures thereat. In response to the Chairman's enquiry, PCO/FEHD said that the Administration would consider setting up the flies monitoring points at both entrances of the WENT Landfill and Ha Pak Nai.

61. The Deputy Chairman and Miss Alice MAK enquired about how the Administration would follow up on the unsatisfactory results of disinfestation work carried out by the Link Management Limited ("the Link") at the markets under its management, and the specific enhancement works that FEHD had implemented thereat. AD(Ops)3/FEHD responded that the Administration would give verbal advice or issue advisory letters to the Link requesting it to improve the environmental hygiene of markets managed by it. FEHD would render technical advice to the Link to strengthen its fly prevention and control measures where necessary.

62. Mr Michael TIEN enquired whether the Administration had systematically reviewed the impact of the proliferation of flies on the public, such as the number of in-patients suffering from diseases spread by flies. He further enquired whether there were indicative indices to measure the impact of flies.

63. DSFH(F)1 advised that flies could cause diseases including cholera, dysentery and food poisoning. It was noted that the numbers of infections of these diseases were stable over the recent period. He undertook to provide written information on the number of cases of these diseases over the past five years to the Panel after the meeting. DSFH(F)1 further said that regarding the indicative indices, while the World Health Organization had provided guidelines on assessing the level of proliferation, the international community had not reached a consensus on the action level. The Administration would make reference to the number of relevant complaints received, results of in-situ inspections and the number of cases of diseases that were spread by flies, in allocating resources to deal with the problem of proliferation of flies.

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VII. Any other business

64. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 4:46 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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