



Your Ref. : CB4/PAC/R65
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23 December 2015
(Urgent by fax 25439197)

Mr Anthony Chu
Clerk, Public Accounts Committee,
Legislative Council Secretariat,
Legislative Council Complex,
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr Chu,

Public Accounts Committee
Consideration of Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 65
Reduction and Recycling of Food Waste

I refer to your letter dated 15 December 2015.

Before responding to your three specific questions, I would like to provide some information on the background of the food waste recycling trial schemes, and our understanding of the government's policy and plan in respect of food waste.

The HA supports the government's environmental protection policies and plans. In respect of food waste, as noted in Audit Report No. 65, Chapter 2, paragraph 1.11, the government published "A Food Waste & Yard Waste Plan for Hong Kong 2014-2022" (the Food Waste Plan) in February 2014. We note from the 2014 Food Waste Plan that, among other things –

- (a) Among food waste management options, "prevent and reduce food waste at source" is the most important, and more important than "recycle to recover energy and nutrients";

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- (b) in the long run, food waste that cannot be avoided should be recycled as far as possible. In preparation for recycling, the Food Waste Plan envisages the need for arrangements to collect and deliver food waste, and for a network of organic waste treatment facilities;
- (c) going forward, the challenge is to continue to promote food waste reduction at source as our priority, while increasing the social momentum to separate waste as we start to build the network of treatment facilities.

The trial scheme that we have done was aimed at contributing to that “social momentum”.

Referring to your points (a) and (b), it is an indication of our tenants’ awareness that over 60% of respondent tenants would support and participate in food waste recycling if it was implemented at their estate. However, how many will actually practise food waste separation and collection in a sustained manner remains to be seen, and will depend on various factors. Some of the factors identified in our 2014 review of the trial schemes are relevant. These include –

- a) Location of food waste collection bins may affect participation. It would be more convenient to tenants if the bins are next to their blocks. In practice, location of bins will have to be determined taking into account the topography and layout of each estate and striking a balance between convenience and possible nuisance to residents;
- b) Food waste collection time and duration may affect participation. Longer collection hours are more convenient to tenants but may cause more nuisance, while shorter hours reduce nuisance but may be less conducive to participation;
- c) Incentive schemes, whether in the form of gifts or coupons, are useful and essential to arouse residents’ interest especially at the inception of the scheme; and
- d) Briefings, site visits to the recycling plant, leaflets and posters are effective tools to enhance residents’ understanding of food waste collection and recycling processes. Supervision and assistance to residents in sorting out and returning food waste at the beginning of the scheme in each estate are necessary.

There are probably other factors that we will need to consider. We will keep in view with EPD and our stakeholders on the subject.

In considering how to promote food waste recycling in PRH estates, we will need to bear in mind the above factors. Our review of the trial scheme has also identified other factors. For example, of the various off-site and on-site methods that

we have tried, the off-site approach seems more preferable, for reasons including the value for public money: the off-site approach involves less one-off and recurrent public money. Also, as noted in the Food Waste Plan, since most housing estates have limited space, on-site composting will have limited potentials. This underlines the importance of the availability of treatment facilities. Another factor that needs to be taken into account, in terms of value for money and sustainability, is the availability of delivery services to take food waste collected from households to the treatment facilities. We shall keep in view such developments in considering how to promote food waste recycling in PRH estates.

In the meantime, we think there is a clear case for doing what we can to promote reduction of food waste at source. The following lists some of our key initiatives so far –

- i) Since 2005, we have partnered with green groups to organise the “Green Delight in Estate” (GDE) which is a community-based programme to promote environmental protection. Under the programme, we organised a series of educational campaign to encourage cherishing food and reduction of food waste at source, which include :
 - ✧ *“Cherish food with reward”*, inviting residents to pledge for cherish food;
 - ✧ *“Food waste has value”*, inviting residents to provide recipes using food residue;
 - ✧ *“Empty your plate”*, encouraging residents to finish all food and not to leave food on the plate;
 - ✧ *“Eat light, Eat right”*, inviting residents to suggest “Eat light recipes”;
 - ✧ *“All about waste”*, using quizzes to promote environmental protection;
 - ✧ *“Waste Reduction Photo Competition”*, inviting residents to snapshot any environmental initiatives.
- ii) We have also produced two video clips namely *“Everybody Has Their Own Way to Save Food”* (一人一個「惜食」行動) and *“Go Green. Eat Light. So Easy!”* (環保輕食好 Easy) to promote eating “light” and environment-friendly, which were broadcast on our HA Housing Channel at the lift lobbies of domestic blocks;
- iii) We have launched another community-based programme, *“Let’s Join Hands to Reduce Waste in Our Estates”*, focusing on the key message that reducing waste at source, including food waste, is the responsibility of every resident.

- iv) Our canteen run by the HA Staff Club has recently signed up the Food-wise Charter with EPD to campaign reduce food at source and facilitate taking away unconsumed food, aiming to instil the food waste prevention and reduction culture to our staff.

All the above measures have achieved some results. Reduction of municipal waste including food waste is a long term effort and we have been tracking PRH waste production and reduction for some time. The waste production per person per day in our PRH has reduced from 0.82Kg in 2003/04 to 0.59Kg in 2014/15, representing a reduction of 28%. We will continue with such effort and launch campaigns and measures to try and further reduce PRH food waste.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosman Wai', followed by a horizontal line.

(Dr Rosman Wai)
for Director of Housing

c.c. Director of Environmental Protection (Fax : 2891 2512)
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