

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 6 April 2017**

Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
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Chairman and Honourable Members,

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) is committed to ensuring food safety and environmental hygiene with a view to promoting public health and improving people's quality of life.

2. In the 2017-18 Estimates, about \$7.5 billion has been earmarked for recurrent expenditure in the policy portfolio of "Environment and Food", representing an increase of about \$450 million (6.4%) over the previous year and accounting for 2% of recurrent government expenditure.

Environmental Hygiene

3. First of all, on environmental hygiene, we will keep up the spirit and sustain the momentum of the "Keep Clean Campaign 2015" by allocating additional resources to the relevant departments this year. In particular, we will provide additional funding of about \$119 million for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to further enhance the cleansing efforts.

4. As before, the Government is committed to effective mosquito prevention and control work through flexible deployment of resources, comprehensive surveillance programme, as well as publicity and education measures, with a view to reducing the risk of outbreaks of dengue fever and Zika virus infection cases in Hong Kong.

Food Safety

5. On the food safety front, we will provide additional funding of about \$24 million for FEHD to enhance food safety control, mainly for re-engineering the Centre for Food Safety's workflow and overhauling its IT systems for more effective data management.

6. In addition, we plan to initiate public consultation work on strengthening the regulation of the levels of metallic contamination in food this year. Also, we will continue to review and update the food safety standards having regard to international practices and local needs.

7. We will also allocate an additional \$17 million for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to enhance food safety control measures at local farms, including conducting antimicrobial resistance surveillance and testing on food animals on the farms.

Public Markets

8. As announced in the Policy Address in January this year, the Government will build sizable public markets in new development areas (NDAs) and has initially identified suitable sites in the Tung Chung New Town Extension Area and Hung Shui Kiu NDA. The Government will

continue to identify suitable sites in other NDAs. FEHD will set up a dedicated team for taking forward a review of the provision and management of public markets.

9. In respect of existing public markets, we are now actively following up the specific improvement proposals for six markets put forward by the consultant, and have completed the consultations with the Market Management Consultative Committees of Sheung Fung Street Market and Lockhart Road Market. We plan to commence improvement works of Lockhart Road Market this year at an estimated cost of \$21 million. Provision has also been earmarked this year to pursue improvement works for several other public markets, including the replacement of ageing lifts and escalators.

10. Separately, the Government has lowered the threshold of tenants' support for the retrofitting of air-conditioning systems in public markets from 85% to 80% since July 2015. Together with the two markets which already secured adequate tenants' support before the lowering of the threshold, there are now a total of 11 markets where sufficient tenants' support has been obtained. The Government is following up with the cases according to the established procedure. Taking into consideration factors such as the findings of the technical feasibility study, the extent of works required, cost effectiveness, impact on business and market operation, and whether the implementation details are acceptable to the tenants concerned, we will decide whether there is a case for seeking funds to carry out the air-conditioning retrofitting works.

Bazaar Policy

11. As I have explained on a number of occasions before, the Government adopts a positive attitude towards bazaar proposals at any location. As long as the proposed bazaars will not compromise food safety and environmental hygiene, and will not obstruct public passageways, when suitable sites have been identified by the organisations and support from local communities and respective District Councils (DCs) have been obtained, the Government will render assistance.

Columbarium Policy

12. The district-based columbarium development scheme has been making good progress. So far, we have obtained the support of relevant DCs for the development of columbarium on 14 potential sites, involving over 590 000 new niches (about two-thirds of the overall planned number of new niches). Among them, 160 000 niches at Tsang Tsui can be completed as early as 2019. We will continue to consult the DCs on several other columbarium projects. We hope to have the support of the local community for the projects.

13. In regulating private columbaria, the Bills Committee has completed the scrutiny of the Private Columbaria Bill. We are going to resume the Second Reading of the Bill at the Legislative Council meeting next week, and hope that Members will support it so that we can implement the regulatory regime in the near future.

Animal Welfare

14. The Government attaches great importance to the promotion of

animal welfare and enhancement of animal management. With the support of the Legislative Council, the newly amended Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Trading and Breeding) Regulations came into effect on 20 March to strengthen the regulation of animal trading, as well as dog breeding. AFCD will closely monitor the implementation of the new regulatory regime while enhancing the publicity efforts on responsible pet ownership and animal adoption.

New Agriculture Policy

15. The New Agriculture Policy launched last year is making good progress. The engineering feasibility study of the Agricultural Park (Agri-Park) has been completed. We have recently commissioned another consultant to undertake the investigation work with a view to drawing up the exact boundary and design for the Agri-Park, on the basis of the recommendation of the engineering feasibility study. We will consult the stakeholders in due course.

16. The \$500 million Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) started accepting applications from the end of last year. The Farm Improvement Scheme under SADF has received over 80 applications with some applications already approved. Through SADF, we encourage farmers to acquire mechanized farming equipment to improve production.

17. FHB and the Development Bureau will also commission a consultancy study within this year on Agricultural Priority Areas to identify relatively large areas of quality agricultural land and formulate policies and measures to promote rehabilitation of fallow agricultural land for long-term agricultural use, with a view to supporting the development of local

agriculture.

Fisheries Development

18. The Government has been supporting the sustainable development of local fisheries industry. The \$500 million Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF), set up in 2014, has approved seven projects, including those on improving aquaculture and fisheries-related ecotourism, with a total commitment of about \$37 million. The initial results of some of these projects are encouraging. We will continue to encourage the industry to make use of SFDF to enhance its overall competitiveness.

19. Chairman, my colleagues and I are happy to answer questions from Members.