

**Speaking Note for Secretary for Food and Health
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee
on 19 April 2018**

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 as well as promoting the sustainable development of the local agriculture and fisheries industry.

2. In the 2018-19 Estimates, about \$8.3 billion has been earmarked for recurrent expenditure in the policy portfolio of “Environment and Food”, representing an increase of about \$800 million (10.7%) over the previous year and accounting for 2.1% of recurrent government expenditure.

Public Markets

3. As far as public markets are concerned, it was announced in the Budget that \$2 billion would be earmarked for implementing a Market Modernisation Programme over the next 10 years. This fulfils the pledge made in the Policy Address last October to allocate resources to improve the environment of existing public markets.

4. A dedicated team has been set up in the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to conduct a comprehensive review of nearly 100 public markets, with a view to improving their facilities and management systematically and putting the precious land resources to most gainful use. Improvement works under the Programme may include early installation of air-conditioning systems, major overhaul or redevelopment as required.

Environmental Hygiene

5. On environmental hygiene, we will allocate additional resources to the relevant departments in 2018-19. This includes increasing the total amount of funding to about \$391 million to FEHD to further enhance the environmental hygiene and cleansing efforts and to step up enforcement and prosecution.

6. 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 Japanese encephalitis cases in Hong Kong.

Food Safety

7. On the food safety front, we will continue to examine and update our food safety standards and regulatory arrangements. Such efforts include putting forth legislative proposals in respect of the regulation of metallic contamination in 2018 following the completion of a public consultation

conducted earlier.

8. We will also allocate an additional \$15 million for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) to enhance food safety control at local farms and to conduct antimicrobial resistance surveillance and testing on food animals on the farms.

Supply and Regulation of Niches

9. The Government is determined to forge ahead with the district-based columbarium development scheme. So far, we have obtained the support of relevant District Councils 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, Tuen Mun can be completed in as early as 2019. If everything goes smoothly, we plan to allocate 20 000 new niches by the end of 2018. We have also put forward proposals on renewable interment period for niches at a recent panel meeting.

10. The Private Columbaria Ordinance came into operation on 30 June 2017. The Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) has started to accept applications for specified instruments from 30 December 2017 onwards. As at 29 March 2018, applications for specified instruments were received from 144 columbaria before the expiry of the grace period. PCLB will handle these applications as soon as possible.

11. The Government will continue to step up promotion efforts to increase the community acceptance of green burial as a sustainable form of ash disposal.

Animal Welfare

12. The Government attaches great importance to animal welfare and animal management. To further enhance our work in this area, we are studying the existing legislation related to animal welfare in the local context by drawing reference from international experience and trends, in which we will explore the introduction of a concept of positive duty of care on animal keepers. We will consult the stakeholders in due course.

13. In addition, the Government will submit proposals to the Legislative Council to amend the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374), requiring the driver of a vehicle in a traffic accident to report the accident to the police when injury to animals (including cats and dogs) is involved.

New Agriculture Policy

14. We strive to implement the New Agriculture Policy. Regarding the Agricultural Park (Agri-Park), it will be delivered in two phases in Kwu Tung South, New Territories according to the recommendation of the engineering feasibility study. We plan to seek funding from the Legislative Council for the construction works of Agri-Park Phase 1, which covers an area of about 11 hectares, in late 2018 or early 2019.

15. We have set up a \$500 million Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund (SADF) to promote the use of mechanized farming equipment to improve production. A total of 26 applications have been received so far. The Farm Improvement Scheme under SADF has received over 180 applications. 173 applications have been approved by AFCD, involving a total funding commitment of about \$5 million for applicants to acquire farming equipment or materials to enhance productivity.

16. FHB and the Development Bureau will also commission a consultancy study in 2018 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.

Fisheries Development

17. The Government has been supporting the sustainable development of local fisheries industry. The Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund (SFDF), set up in 2014, has approved eight projects, including those on improving aquaculture and fisheries-related ecotourism, with a total commitment of about \$40 million. We will continue to encourage the industry to make use of SFDF to upgrade and improve operation for enhancing its overall competitiveness. Meanwhile, we will combat illegal fishing activities and work on plans to expand the existing fish culture zones.

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